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"SPEAK TO ME, MY DARLING!" SAID REGINALD; "LOOK UP AND SPEAK TO ME."

A HAPPY STRATAGEM.

[A NOVELETTE.]

CHAPTER I.

His name was Reginald, but his friends and intimates never called him anything but Rex; perhaps they thought this kingly title suited to him—perhaps they really believed he was powerful as a sovereign, for this much was certain, if ever man seemed born for prosperity and to go through life without a care, that man was Reginald Fairfax.

Everything succeeded with him. Left an orphan at five years old, he was adopted by a wealthy uncle; he grew up at Fairfax Castle its heir presumptive—he won honours at college, and troops of friends; finally entered the army, became the darling of his regiment, and as it

was quartered at Aldershot, continued never to miss anything worth seeing of the London season. Wherever he went he was a favourite. Blue-eyed, handsome, and intelligent, at twenty-nine Captain Fairfax might have had his choice of Belgravia's beauties, and what was more to the purpose, the parents of any beauty he selected would have greeted his alliance with acclamation; for was he not the heir of his uncle, Sir Isaac, and whenever that elderly gentleman departed this life would not his handsome nephew come in for the baronetcy, for Fairfax Castle, a house in town, family jewels, and twenty thousand a-year?

"The estate is not entailed," whispered Mrs. Burns to her friend Lady Carteret. "Sir Isaac would cut off his nephew with a shilling if Rex did anything to displease him."

Lady Carteret smiled blandly; she was thinking a match with her daughter could not possibly be displeasing to the baronet. She replied, with quiet dignity,—

"Captain Fairfax is not in the least likely to

offend Sir Isaac; besides, everyone knows the old gentleman is devoted to him."

"Not so very old," said Mrs. Burns, spitefully. "Sir Isaac is barely sixty; he might marry again any day."

"Nonsense!" returned my lady, curtly. "Hush! here he comes. I declare he is the handsomest man in the room!"

He certainly was. A tall, soldierly figure, hair of dark curling brown, the clear cut classic features, which were almost an inheritance in his family, and a pair of dark, expressive, blue eyes; evening dress was singularly becoming to Rex—just now he looked his best.

A young girl was on his arm, a girl with bright, sparkling, black eyes and masses of raven hair, a rosy colour, and easy grace. She was Lady Carteret's only child, and that matron was very pleased, indeed, to observe the good understanding evidently existing between her and the young officer.

"You look flushed, Helen," she said, with

maternal anxiety. "You should not dance too much."

"You could not expect her to sit still," said Rex, with a smile. "Lady Helen is the best waltzer in the room."

The music struck up again, he bent over her and asked if she were rested. She assented, and took his arm. The Countess looked up.

"You will take care of her, Captain Fairfax! Remember, she is not very strong!"

"I ask nothing better than to take care of her for ever!" said Rex, in a tone so low that no one but Lady Carteret heard the words.

She leant back with a sigh of relief as she caught them; she knew then the prize she had hankered for was hers—that the proposal had been made and answered—her portionless daughter was engaged to the best match of the season.

Lady Carteret was not a designing woman, but fate had been very cruel to her. Married to a nobleman of fair estate and good fortune, she had never expected to be left a widow with eight hundred a year, the very modest settlement made before her marriage; but, alas! the Carteret estates were strictly entailed! No son was born to her, so when her husband died she had meekly to give up her grand establishment and sink into retirement.

All her hopes were centred in Helen. Her daughter must make a grand match, and recover the riches she longed for.

This was Lady Helen's second season, however, and as yet no suitor had come forward whom her mother regarded as eligible. Captain Fairfax satisfied her utmost ambition.

She had an old acquaintance with Sir Isaac, and felt certain he would welcome her child as his niece. The world looked very fair to the Countess Dowager on that June evening. She sat up till three in the morning without finching, and when Rex at last led Lady Helen to the carriage, her mother was as wide awake as herself, instead of dozing wearily in one corner, as was her favourite custom.

"Shall you be at home to-morrow, Lady Carteret?" asked Rex, as he took hold of the dowager's hand.

"To-day, you mean," said Helen, lightly. "It is past four!"

"Come to lunch," said her mother, pressing the young man's hand almost affectionately; "we shall be delighted to see you."

The carriage drove off, there was a pause, and then Lady Carteret said, inquiringly,—

"Well?"

"It is all right," said Helen, quite gaily. "Mamma, what is Fairfax Castle like? I suppose we shall have to live there!"

"It is charming!"

"I hope so. Captain Fairfax seems infatuated with it!"

"You are a lucky girl, Helen!"

"Mamma, that's not polite of you. It would sound so much nicer if you said Captain Fairfax is a lucky man!"

"You know I mean that too. He will be an excellent husband, I am sure."

Helen smiled brightly.

"We need not have been so anxious last season," she said, carelessly. "You see I have done much better for myself by waiting!"

"And you like Captain Fairfax, my love?"

"I agree with you that he is charming!"

"And he will have twenty thousand a-year?"

"Yes. Oh! the relief of not having to scheme and calculate our expenses! Mother, I think it is much easier for rich people to be good!"

"Helen!"

"I mean it, mamma! If I hadn't had to pinch and scrape and think about money matters all my life, I should be able to forget Captain Fairfax is rich, and think only of himself; now, handsome and charming as he is, I can't help remembering he has twenty thousand a-year—or will have, perhaps, some day."

Mother and daughter rose late after their excitement; Helen came into her mother's dressing-room about twelve. She was clad from head to foot in a loose clinging muslin wrapper; there was a pink silk girdle round her waist, and she wore knots of the same coloured ribbon at her

throat; her soft hair was coiled low on her neck, the front cut short, curled over her forehead. She was very pretty; the simple white dress suited her, and at twenty-two Helen Devenish was young enough to dispense with any aids of art to deck her beauty; seen in the fresh morning's light she was quite as attractive as she had been the night before.

"How do I look, mamma?"

"Beautiful. That dress suits you perfectly."

"Mamma," said Helen, dubiously, "what are we to do about my trousseau? You know Madame Louise says she won't take another order until her account is settled. Horrid woman!"

The Countess had pinched and scraped all through her daughter's childhood so as to be able to launch out when Helen was presented. But alas! even her carefully accumulated savings could not stand the expenses of two London seasons. She was getting hopelessly into debt, and literally knew not where to turn for a penny of ready money.

"Don't think about that," she said, placidly.

"Ways and means will be found."

That was a set speech with Lady Carteret. She was fond of saying, when anything was particularly desired, and could not be had, that "it would be found."

She half-closed her eyes and looked upwards very sanctimoniously always when she uttered her favourite formula, so that strangers sometimes fancied she expected the desired article to fall from Heaven.

"I hope they will," said Helen, a little tartly.

"Rex wants us to be married in August; so there is not much time."

"August! I can never manage it by then."

"It would be more expensive to keep me on your hands, I think, mamma."

A loud knock at the door—a message. Captain Fairfax was in the drawing-room. The Countess looked at her daughter.

"You had better leave me alone with him for ten minutes, I think."

"Twenty, if you like it better," said Helen, nonchalantly, and then she threw herself on a couch, while the Countess went to greet her future son-in-law.

"Helen has told you of my wishes!" said Rex, with that winning way which always gained him golden opinions. "Dear Lady Carteret, will you trust your daughter to me? I will cherish her as my own life."

"I am sure of it," said the Countess, enthusiastically. "Captain Fairfax, I can sanction your engagement with every confidence."

"And you will use your influence with Helen to consent to a speedy wedding! I hate long engagements, Lady Carteret. They are a great mistake."

"But, remember, there is a great deal to be thought of," said the widow, pleasantly; "and Sir Isaac must be consulted."

"My uncle will be delighted to welcome Helen. He has often expressed a wish that I should marry."

"But he may not approve of your selecting a portionless bride for all that."

"Sir Isaac is not so mercenary as you would infer. For years he has not lived up to his income, and I am certain he will enable me to make an ample settlement upon Helen. He has always promised to allow me five thousand a-year whenever I married, and at his death—though I trust that is far distant—his whole property will descend to me."

"I was at the Castle once," said the Countess, "a good many years ago. I remember your uncle perfectly. What a strange thing he never married!"

Rex laughed.

"A good thing for me," he said, lightly. "I fear my prospects would not be very brilliant if he had."

Helen decided the ten minutes stipulated for had expired, and came in. Lady Carteret discreetly withdrew, and Rex going up to his fiancée took her hand in his.

"All is going smoothly with me, Helen," he whispered. "Your mother has no difficulties

to our happiness, my darling. Surely we shall soon be each other's for all time."

He had drawn her very close. One hand was toyed with the curls on her forehead. He looked into her face very fondly. Rex Fairfax was not a man to give away his heart lightly, and this dark-eyed damsel was his first love.

"There is your uncle," suggested Helen. "Mamma seems to think he may object."

Reginald's thoughts flew back to an evening, not a week ago, when he was at Fairfax Castle, and had openly told Sir Isaac of his hopes.

"I don't like Lady Carteret," had said the Baronet, simply; "she is not a good woman, Rex."

"Helen is not in the least like her mother, uncle; she is the sweetest, most artless creature."

"And has read up your value as heir of Fairfax. Ay, Rex, you are no mean match for a portionless girl!"

"Lady Helen is an earl's daughter."

"And penniless! I wish your thoughts had gone elsewhere, Rex, my boy; I do, indeed."

"I have never seen any woman I should care to marry but Helen Devenish."

"You have not seen all the women in the world, Rex."

"But do you mean, sir, you would refuse your consent to my marriage with Lady Helen?"

Old Sir Isaac answered promptly,—

"Certainly not. I am quite ready to receive her as my niece. You will have my best wishes for your happiness if she marries you."

For once Rex was disconcerted.

"I don't understand you, sir. One moment you seem to infer Lady Helen is mercenary for accepting me; the next you hint she will refuse me."

"Time will show, lad."

"But I am sure of your consent!"

"Certain. You have been as a son to me for years, Rex, and I have no wish to cross your inclinations."

Nothing could be plainer language than this, so the Captain considered himself free to tell the Countess his uncle would welcome Helen as a niece, and approve his engagement.

In his heart of hearts Rex disliked Lady Carteret quite as much as his uncle did, and was quite resolved not to use much of her after his marriage. He deemed Helen innocent of her mother's faults. He loved her, and proposed to her of his own free will; but that did not blind him to the fact that from the moment of his introduction to the Countess she had marked him as her prey. So when Helen hinted his uncle might object Captain Fairfax soothed her fears.

"He has wished me to marry for years. I am quite sure he will love you dearly."

"Shall you tell him at once, Rex?"

"Certainly. You know, Helen, I want our wedding to be in August—barely two months hence."

"Why are you in such a hurry?"

"I want my wife."

"You have done very well without her, hitherto, it seems to me."

"But I don't mean to do without her much longer now, Helen. Be a good girl, and fix a day in the first week of August for our wedding."

"But the trousseau!"

"I don't see what you want with a trousseau," he returned, impetuously. "Surely you have a white dress that you can be married in! The one you have on would do very well; it is very pretty."

Helen smiled. Ah, if she could only follow his suggestion, and have no trousseau, what an awful perplexity it would save her! What calculations! What eating humble pie to impatient tradespeople might be avoided if she dared to set the world's customs at defiance, and become a wife without a trousseau.

A tall man-servant came in and announced lunch. Lady Helen and her lover followed him to the dining-room, and a very pleasant, sociable little meal followed. The Countess always lived well. She used to say that no one but rich people could afford to betray their practised economy. The repast was simple, but perfect of



its kind. It was almost ended when the tall manservant approached Captain Fairfax with a solemn air.

"A person has just brought this, sir. It was thought to be of consequence, and so has been sent on from Aldershot."

He handed Rex a telegram. Somehow those yellow envelopes seem always to carry with them a burden of fear. Strong man as he was Rex started. Helen gave a little scream, and the Countess said, sweetly,—

"Pray read your message, Captain Fairfax. I hope and trust it brings no ill-news."

"Do read it," urged Helen. "You look quite troubled."

Thus adjured Rex tore open the envelope; the message it enclosed was very short.

"Come at once. Sir Isaac is dying." The sender was Martha Gibson, his uncle's house-keeper.

"Come at once. Sir Isaac is dying." Rex read the words over again and again before he seemed to realise their meaning, then he turned to Lady Cartaret.

"I must go to Fairfax at once; my uncle is very ill."

Then ensued a hurried buzz of sympathy, condolences, and surprise. Rex, who knew the train service to Fairfax almost by heart, saw at once, with a little haste, he could catch the five o'clock express from King's Cross, even if he spared a few minutes to telegraph to his servant to follow him with some clothes. He had hardly time for more than farewell to Helen, though the Countess left them alone graciously that they might enjoy a *clôture*. He only took her in his arms, and pressed her to his heart.

"I shall not be away long—you will think of me often, sweetheart!"

"Every day. Rex, is Sir Isaac very ill?"

"I fear so."

"Then you may come back Sir Reginald—"

She stopped herself abruptly. The expression which crossed his face told her she had made a mistake, and she went on, hurriedly. "But you may find him better!"

"I hope so. Will you write to me, Helen?"

She promised. Rex took his last kiss from her lips, and sprang into the cab which had been sent for. Lady Helen stood at the window till it was out of sight.

"I wish the telegram had not come," she said to her mother; "it seems an ill-omen."

"Nonsense! I am glad it did not come yesterday. Now Captain Fairfax is your promised husband, and his absence does not matter."

"It makes me shiver," said Helen, fretfully.

"Bad news following so close upon an engagement must be an ill-omen."

"I don't believe in omens," said the Countess quietly, "and I don't call this bad news."

Helen started.

"Instead of being the wife of plain Captain Fairfax for a dozen years or so you will begin your life as a baronet's bride. If Sir Isaac is obliging enough to die before the wedding I shall be uncommonly grateful to him."

"Mother!"

"It will be to your advantage, child. He may consent to the match, to please Rex, but he won't like it."

"You never said so before."

"No."

"You can't be sure of it."

"Listen, Helen. Years ago, before ever you were born, I offended Sir Isaac. He was plain Mr. Fairfax then, but I don't suppose he has forgotten it."

"What did you do?"

"I refused to marry him."

Helen stared. There seemed nothing but surprises before her, but she loved her mother after her fashion and was loyal to her.

"I don't see why he should be offended at that. You had a perfect right to refuse if you liked."

"You don't understand," said the Countess, coolly. "We were engaged, but after that I met your father; he was Earl of Cartaret and had ten thousand a year. Isaac Fairfax was a younger son with a scanty portion."

"And you jilted him!"

"I did."

"Oh, mother!"

"Any woman of sense would have done the same, but Helen, in my case it didn't answer. Your father never trusted me; he was always throwing my falsehood in my teeth, and within a year of my wedding Isaac came into the family estates and title."

"How sorry you must have been!" said her daughter, naively.

"Sorry! I should think so, especially as the time went on and I had no child. If I had had a boy my position would have been assured, but I was childless until I had been married four years, and then you came into the world, Helen. You owe me a great deal for the disappointment of that time."

"And you have never seen Sir Isaac since?"

"Never."

"He has not married?"

"No. For two years after our rupture he wandered over Europe. Not even the news of his inheritance brought him home. At last, when his younger brother died, he came back to England to make a home for his orphan nephew. He has lived at Fairfax Castle ever since, and the world regards him as a cold, austere man, with no feeling for any human creature except Reginald."

"It is a strange story."

"From the moment your father died I had but one scheme, one ambition, that you should marry Reginald Fairfax. I have slaved and toiled to gain this end. To-day my efforts are crowned with success, and, like a foolish child, you begin to talk of ill-omens. Put such thoughts out of your head; think of the time when you will be the mistress of Fairfax Castle, and this miserable struggle for existence, this hand-to-hand fight with gentler poverty, is over. I have worked hard, Helen; I have schemed perpetually to gain this triumph for you, but my task is achieved now, and I am content."

"Do you suppose Rex knows, mother?"

"What?"

"About you and his uncle."

"I should think not; men are unlike women, and not given to tell the story of their disappointments. If Sir Isaac recovers, and you live with him at Fairfax, you must never betray what I have told you."

"I'd rather he wouldn't recover, mother," said the girl, slowly; "it seems to me he must hate me as your child."

"I don't see why; it seems to me just a mere fate that has thrown you and Rex together. Depend upon it, Helen, that is it; you are Reginald's destiny, just as I was Sir Isaac's."

Meanwhile Captain Fairfax had reached London and caught the five o'clock express. He was now speeding northward as fast as steam could take him. Very mingled were his feelings—joy for the promise of Helen's love, sorrow for the danger of the only father he had ever known. Sir Isaac had been an indulgent guardian; he had never crossed his nephew's way in anything, and the two loved each other warmly.

Not a single fear for his own future troubled Rex—he was too much used to prosperity to become anxious; besides, he was so sure of his uncle's affection that he felt himself as truly the heir of Fairfax as though he had been born Sir Isaac's son, with title and estates strictly entailed upon him. There was no pondering over his future to distract his thoughts from his uncle's danger and Helen's love. Rex felt he never should forgive himself if he were too late, if he could never hear that kindly voice or press that fatherly hand again. He was in time.

He read that much in the face of the groom who stood waiting with Sir Isaac's dog-cart, to which was harnessed the fleetest horse in the Castle stables. The man touched his hat respectfully, and declared his master was still alive.

"But there's no hope, sir; he's sinking fast."

"What was it?" in an awe-struck tone, as he sprang to his seat and they dashed off.

"A fall from his horse, sir. Sir Isaac was brought home last night; we telegraphed to you at once."

"Is he conscious?"

"Yes, sir; and he does nothing but ask for you. Mrs. Gibson says it's piteous to hear him."

Rex rushed up the grand staircase at the top of his speed; then he subdued his haste and involuntarily heaved his breath as he turned the handle of his uncle's door and went into the invalid's presence.

Dying! ah, not a doubt of it. Little as he knew of illness Rex felt that as he gazed on the pale, drawn features; then he flung himself on his knees by the bed, and taking his uncle's hand kissed it as tenderly as a woman.

Nurse and doctor understood that the presence so longed for was come; they went slowly out and left the uncle and nephew alone—the one so full of life and strength, the other on the very threshold of the grave.

"Rex."

"My dear uncle!"

"It's all over, my boy; I'm going home. I shall see your parents there, Rex."

The Captain's eyes were full of tears.

"But there's something else, lad"—his falling breath made his voice so faint Rex could hardly catch his words—"I wanted you to be happy; I did indeed, Rex."

"I am sure of it," said Reginald heartily.

"You have been the best and kindest friend orphan ever had. Uncle, from the day I came here you have made my life one long happiness."

A smile rested on the old man's face.

"I loved you, lad, dearly, and I wanted to save you. You'll remember that it was from no ill-will, only just that you should be safe, not, as I was, tricked and deceived."

His voice failed. Rex bent over him.

"I will remember."

"And you'll bear no malice—I'd not rest easy in my grave, lad, if I thought you did."

"I shall never think of you with anything but gratitude, uncle—never!"

"And you'll be good to her—my little girl, who never knew her father!"

Bewildered almost beyond expression, Rex could only ascribe these words to the wanderings of delirium. He bowed his head in token of assent, and happy in that unspoken promise, Sir Isaac's lips parted in a smile. He sank back upon his pillow quite dead. He had only lived half an hour after his nephew's coming.

As one in a dream, Reginald went to bed, but no sleep awaited him—that passionate pleading rang in his ears. Pardon! What was it he had promised to forgive? From whom had his uncle meant to save him?—and who—oh! who was the little girl for whom his kindness had been promised—the little girl who had never known her father?

It was ten o'clock the next day—Rex sat trifling with a late breakfast—when the servant told him Mr. Ashwin had arrived. The name recalled Rex to the fact that many business arrangements had to be made. Mr. Ashwin had been solicitor to the Fairfax family for nearly thirty years. Surely he might suggest a clue to those dying words which rang so painfully in Sir Reginald's ears! The two gentlemen shook hands.

"I am an early intruder, Sir Reginald," said the man of law, gravely, "but I promised your uncle to place this letter in your hands as soon as possible after his death, and I have a great deal to discuss with you at your convenience."

The letter was very short. It covered only one side of a sheet of paper.

"MY MUCH LOVED BOY,—I always meant to leave you my estate and its revenues. The large savings which have accumulated since I came in for the title seemed to me an ample provision for other claims. But you tell me you love Lady Helen Davenish. Her mother is a friend in human shape. She spells my life. If I can help it her child shall not wreck yours. I have thought long and anxiously about my will, and have now made one which will save your being the victim of a heartless coquette. If as things now are, Lady Helen accepts you she will do so for love's sake only—if she refuses, you will at least be

spared becoming the prey of an adventurer. You have no extravagant habits or expensive tastes. I have left you enough for a simple home life. I never loved you more, Rex, than now, when I seem to be despoiling you of what you have regarded as your birthright."

In utter amazement Rex turned to Mr. Ashwin.

"What does it all mean? Am I disinherited?"

"I have the will here if you will allow me—"

But Rex interrupted him.

"No, no. I can't listen to a rigmorale. Just tell me the facts plainly."

"Sir Isaac has decreed that all your debts should be paid out of his estate."

"I haven't got any."

"And that you should enjoy the house known as Marshlands for the term of your natural life, and an income of eight hundred a-year to keep it up with."

Rex stared.

"But this place, the town house, the Fairfax revenues and all his funded property, what on earth has my uncle done with these?"

"He has left all the funded property to a young lady. This estate and its revenues as well as the town house come to you on one condition."

"And that is?"

"That you marry the same young lady."

"It's absurd. I am an engaged man," he paused; then added, "besides, I never heard my uncle speak of any young lady. Who is she?"

"Sir Isaac's only child."

Rex nearly tumbled off his chair in amazement.

"Sir Isaac was never married."

"Pardon me. Seven-and-twenty years ago he was jilted by Miss Helen Derry, now the Dowager Lady Carteret; in desperation he married a beautiful actress."

"Married her?"

"Certainly, Sir Reginald; the certificate has been in my hands for years."

"But why did he keep it secret?"

"It was a singularly unhappy marriage. Lady Fairfax adored her husband, and was wretched when she discovered he had married her out of pique. She claimed the only redress he could offer her—her freedom. She took her child with her; being a girl she said, bitterly, the infant had no value in the father's eyes. Lady Fairfax and her babe remained in America when Sir Isaac came home, and settled at the Castle."

"And surely he heard from her?"

"Never but once. In that letter she rejected all offers of pecuniary assistance. She could earn enough, she said, to support herself and child."

"Then she may be alive now?"

"It is probable."

"And the girl may be married?"

"No. It was the one condition stipulated by Sir Isaac that his daughter should never enter into any matrimonial engagement without his knowledge and sanction. He has never been asked for the latter, so Miss Fairfax must be free."

"She'd be an old maid by this time."

"She would be twenty-four; her mother's age at the time of the marriage."

"Did you ever see—Lady Fairfax?"

"Once."

"And was she presentable?"

"I thought her one of the finest ladies and most beautiful women I ever met. If her daughter resembles her you are to be congratulated, Sir Reginald."

"It would make no difference to me whether she is humpbacked or a model of loveliness. I am engaged to the Lady Helen Devenish."

"Indeed?"

"Eight hundred a-year and Marshlands is a great contrast from what I expected."

"Sir Isaac seemed positive you would understand his motives."

"I do. I bear him no ill-will. He was influenced by an almost insane dislike to Lady Carteret. Besides, Ashwin, after all, his daughter has the best right to the Castle."

"Miss Fairfax can only enjoy the Castle as your wife, Sir Reginald."

"But surely if I refuse—"

"There is no question of refusal, unless you are married within three years of your uncle's death the Castle and its revenues will be the property of trustees, to be held until your eldest son, or Miss Fairfax's attains the age of twenty-one, when that lucky young gentleman comes in for the whole, with the savings of one-and-twenty years."

Rex brightened.

"I'm glad my children will own the old place. I am to be married in August, Mr. Ashwin, so I think I have every chance of providing an heir to the estate before my unknown cousin, whom you represent as fancy free."

Mr. Ashwin looked ominously grave.

"You forget," he said, gently, "Lady Helen may think it prudent at least to postpone your wedding."

CHAPTER II.

SOMEWHERE within the four miles radius of Charing-cross, somewhere in densely-populated London, there stands a long, narrow street, whose dingy, depressed-looking houses are for the most part let in lodgings. An eminently respectable place is Malcolm-street, S.E., reader, but anything but cheerful. Its inhabitants have generally seen better days, and now swell the ranks of the shabby-genteel, tolling harder far than upper servants or charwomen, and yet earning a very slender maintenance, to gain even which they must work so incessantly that they have little time to note the dinginess of their surroundings, or to wonder what there is in Malcolm-street so objectionable to the sun as to drive him away from the locality even in bright June.

In the "parlours"—we use the phraseology of the district—of No. 9, Malcolm-street, a young lady lived alone, supporting herself, precariously enough, by the higher branches of fancy needlework. If only some wealthy patroness could have discovered Beatrice St. John her fortune would have been made; her talents both for designing and executing elaborate embroidery, would have brought her in an ample sum, but unluckily for her she did not know this. She had only been three years in England, and it was only for one of them that she had had to support herself. She worked for one or two shops, who reaped a rich profit from her exertions, and in return allowed her just enough to keep body and soul together.

She was sitting one June morning, about a week after Rex learned he was not his uncle's heir, busy at an embroidery frame, making sprays of pomegranate blossoms on panels of black satin, destined to adorn the dress of a young and beautiful peeress. Her ladyship would pay a goodly number of guineas for the same, and Beatrice hoped when her task, which took her many weary hours each day for a week was ended, thirty shillings would find their way into her purse.

She was unusually cheerful to-day. It was so fine that the sun had managed to find his way even into Malcolm-street. Beatrice thought that when the panels were finished even she might take a holiday. Half-a-crown would pay her fare to Kew by boat; there and back, and enable her to have a row on the river, and tea in some of the rural arbours erected for that purpose; besides, it was a bright prospect, a whole afternoon away from smoky London—a whole five hours in the fresh open country. A smile came to the thin face at the bare idea, for Beatrice was country born and bred. She had never been able to leave the great city in which her lot was cast; she was always longing for the clear blue sky, and the fresh green fields.

She was older than Lady Helen Devenish, but she looked younger in spite of hard work and the lines sorrow had written on her face; for the rest she had nothing in common with Reginald's darling. Beatrice was above the middle height; she had a slight drooping figure, large tender blue eyes, hair of brightest gold, a complexion

almost too delicate for health, and long, thin white hands. She wore a soft grey dress of the material known as nun's veiling, and there was a knot of crimson ribbon at her throat. The dress was not new; indeed, it bore traces of long wear, but the linen collar and cuffs were spotless; the bright hair was coiled with simple elegance round the small head, and though many might have called Beatrice St. John shabby, no one could have said she looked anything but a lady.

She was singing quietly to herself as she worked, and her thoughts were so full of her expedition to Kew that she paid little attention to the outer world, so she never heard a fly stop at the door and someone gave a resounding double knock a minute after, while the landlady, with an expression of extreme surprise, announced,—

"A gentleman to see you, miss."

For one instant Beatrice looked astonished; and then, as she caught sight of the stranger's face, a flood of joyous recognition broke over her own, and she stretched out her two hands in eager greeting.

"Oh, Uncle Will!"

The gentleman took her in his arms and kissed her. He was fifty turned, and yet there was a suspicious moisture in his eyes as he looked at the sweet, pale face.

"I thought you would never come," she whispered. "Mother said you must be dead, or you would never have left us so long without news."

"My dear, when I went away, seven years ago, I made up my mind never to come back unless I had made my fortune. I was a burden to your mother for many years, but when I said good-bye to her last I vowed to myself I'd stay away until I could be a credit to her."

Bee's eyes filled; it was too late now, her mother had been dead more than a year. Did Uncle Will know it, or must she break the news?

"Yes," he said, in answer to the tender question in her blue eyes, "I got your letter, Bee, but I only got it six months ago. I was doing well then, and I thought I'd not write, but just wind up my affairs and come straight home. I've done rarely well, child; I've made fifty thousand pounds, and it's hard if you and I can't manage to live on the interest of that."

Bee just took his rough, brown hand, and held it in both of hers.

"I shouldn't mind if you'd come back without a penny, Uncle Will, so that I had you. Oh! if you knew the lonely time I have had since mother died."

"And her annuity died with her. How have you managed, child, all this while?"

Bee told him, Mr. Carlyle admired the delicate embroidery very much, but he sniffed prodigiously when he heard the rate at which it had been remunerated.

"They've been imposing on you, Bee," he said, decidedly. "I'll warrant someone's been making a pretty profit out of your labour, but that's all over now. We will have a nice little home somewhere in the country, and I will see what an old man can do to make you happy."

"You're not old, uncle!"

"Not far from sixty, Bee. There were ten years between me and your mother, poor girl!"

"You loved her very much, Uncle Will!"

"I loved her better than anything on earth, but I couldn't make her happy, Bee. I had to stand by and see her suffer—as I hope few women do suffer—without being able to spare her a single pang. You're not so beautiful as she was, Bee; Heaven grant you'll not be so unhappy."

Bee remembered he had always spoken in this strain. She had been a slip of a girl in her teens when Uncle Will left England, but even then he had often told her she ought to be thankful she had not inherited her mother's beauty. In his opinion beauty and misfortune went together.

"Mamma was always sad," said Bee, thoughtfully.

"She wasn't," retorted Uncle Will, almost as though Bee had maligned his sister's memory. "She was the life of the house when she was a child. Some great lady took a fancy to her just because she was so merry. Mary used to go and sing to her, and when she died she left her a

hundred a year, just out of gratitude, because she had cheered her last days," said Bee; "the sweetest, best of mothers; but I can't fancy her cheerful."

"Because her heart was broken before ever you were born. I'm not a revengeful man, Bee, I never bear anyone malice; but if there's anything would have given me real pleasure it's to have stood up face to face with your father, and told him what I thought of his conduct. Then I'd just have put a bullet through his head and have left him."

"Perhaps he suffered too," said Bee, slowly; "and it is so long ago I am sure mamma forgave him."

"She never allowed there was anything to forgive. You take my advice, Bee, and steer clear of love. I'll make a nice little home for you, and you shall have your own way in everything. Just let marrying alone, no good ever comes of it."

Bee smiled.

"I don't think you need be afraid. I never thought of such a thing, Uncle Will."

"You are quite sure?"

"I don't think I ever spoke to a gentleman in my life under fifty."

"Quite right," said Mr. Carlyle, approvingly. "Bee, you'll make a better thing of your life than your poor mother did."

Bee did not answer; she had never heard the rights of her mother's story, only that she had loved and lost, had been married, and lost her husband by a separation as cruel as death. The only thing she knew of her father was that from him she inherited her blue eyes. When he died, where he was buried, what position in life he filled, she had no idea; only from her mother's shrinking from all acquaintances Bee had fancied her unknown father must have moved in society, and his widow kept in strict retirement lest his child should be brought suddenly in contact with any of his kin.

"Where shall we take a house?" demanded Mr. Carlyle. "You know, Bee, I shall not let you stay here any longer; the air of this place can't be good for you. You look like a little white ghost."

"I should like to live near the river," said Bee, quietly. "Uncle Will, let us have a furnished cottage somewhere near the Thames till the summer is over, and then we can think of something else."

"And you'll tell these people," jerking his head in the direction of the embroidery frame, "that you'll have nothing more to do with them."

Half-an-hour's work would finish Bee's last panel, so she readily consented. Mr. Carlyle actually sat patiently while she put those last stitches; then the two relations set out—Bee to carry the last memorial of her toil to her employers, Mr. Carlyle to a house-agent's to procure a list of desirable cottage residences near the Thames, which were to be let furnished for the summer months.

She had to wait some time. The fashionable modiste who employed her had no scruples about taking up Miss St. John's leisure; and as she sat looking at the marvels of elegant millinery around her she suddenly overheard a discussion between Madame herself and one of her assistants.

"Another toilette for Lady Helen Devenish! Certainly not. Miss Mills, you must be stupid to ask such a question. You know I shall send nothing more to that house until my bill is paid in full."

"But Lady Helen is on the point of marriage," suggested the assistant. "For the sake of her future custom surely—"

"Her future custom won't be worth a rap. Captain Fairfax is disinherited. He has nothing but a bare eight hundred a year to keep up the baronetcy on. If my Lady Helen is the woman I take her for she'll break off the engagement. Eight hundred a year! Why it wouldn't dress her respectably, let alone anything else."

The words made little impression on Bee at the time, but they were destined to recur to her again and again.

Madame condescended to remember Miss St. John, and even commended the panels. She had several other commissions; but Bee declined.

"I am not going to undertake any more needlework," she said, simply.

Horried at the idea of losing her, Madame affected to think it was a question of money, and offered double and treble her former terms, so that Bee understood her uncle's idea was correct; she had been imposed upon. She gave Madame no reason for her sudden rebellion, but, with a firm refusal, left the room.

She seemed to walk on air that bright June day. Her toll was over. Uncle Will had come back. They would be happy together. Everything looked fair in her future. She did not even regret the mother who had left her not two years before. That mother's heart had been broken before her child's birth.

Bee knew that it would have been cruel to wish to recall her to earth, and so there was nothing to alloy the strange happiness that seemed to have dawned for the girl.

Uncle Will would return at five to conduct Beatrice to his hotel. She had barely two hours to pack up, pay her landlady's bill, and prepare to leave the only London home she had ever known.

She admitted herself with a latch-key, and went straight to her little sitting-room. Then she started. What a day of surprises this was to be to her! Here, in her own abode, comfortably ensconced in an arm-chair, sat a perfect stranger.

He did not seem in the least disconcerted at the arrival of the lady of the domain. He rose and bowed courteously.

"Miss St. John, I think?"

"Yes, sir."

"Your mother's name was Mary. She was the daughter of a Mr. James Carlyle."

Bee bent her head in token of assent. She really felt too perplexed to speak.

"My dear young lady, I am delighted to have found you. I am the bearer of most important tidings. You must not regard me with suspicion. For thirty years I was your father's confidential friend and adviser."

"I never knew my father, sir."

Mr. Ashwin sighed.

"He was a good man and true; the one mistake of his was that, when filleted by a mercenary woman, he married out of pique a creature so sensitive that the discovery he did not love her well-nigh broke her heart."

"That was my mother!" said Bee, quickly.

"Sir, do you think I can have kindly thoughts of the man who broke her heart?"

"I think you will forgive him as she did, Miss St. John, they are reunited now, and there are no mistis between them—your father died almost suddenly last week."

Beatrice started.

"I always thought he died when I was born! I was given to understand so!"

"No. His last thoughts were of you, his last business cares were to assure your future!"

"My future is secure already. Had you come two hours later you would have found me gone."

"And where?"

"My mother's brother has returned from America with a large fortune! his one object is to make a home for me."

"You will not need it. By your father's will you inherit a London mansion and a hundred thousand pounds in funded property."

"I don't want it."

"I fear you must take it!"

Bee's eyes filled with tears.

"It will disappoint my uncle cruelly! He has come home so happy at the thought of providing for me! How can I tell him I don't need his help?"

"There is no occasion to tell him at once; indeed, you might keep the secret for an indefinite time. I have the honour to be appointed your guardian, and I can manage your property without troubling you; I shall only require your signature occasionally and your correct address, so that I can send you the interest of your fortune."

Bee faltered.

"Do you mean I am rich?"

"You have three thousand a year even if your property remains in the funds; your house in Belgrave is usually let for three hundred. It is a superb mansion!"

"I don't want it!" said Bee, helplessly. "Sir, I know you mean all kindness, but I wish you had not found me. Uncle Will and I meant to be so happy, and this news will be a bitter grief to him. He cannot bear any mention of my father."

"My dear young lady!" said the lawyer, gently, "you are troubling yourself without any need! Unless you tell him, Mr. Carlyle will never know of your inheritance. If I send you the interest of your fortune twice a year, you can forget the circumstances in the intervals."

"Do you mean it?"

"Yes. I have one thing more to ask—you will not think me inquisitive! Are you engaged?"

Bee smiled.

"Uncle Will asked me that very thing this morning! No, Mr. Ashwin, I am not engaged! I never mean to be. I shall remain plain Beatrice St. John to the end of my days!"

The lawyer looked up quickly.

"You surely are aware St. John is merely an assumed name! Your mother bore it on the stage. She went back to it when she parted from her husband."

"Then what is my real name?"

"Mary Fairfax."

"Not even Beatrice?"

"No; you are Mary Fairfax, only child of the late Sir Isaac Fairfax, of Fairfax Castle, and first cousin of the new baronet, Captain Sir Reginald Fairfax. But this can make no difference; you are of age, and your own mistress. If you choose to call yourself Miss St. John, no one can prevent it."

Bee's eyes filled with tears.

"I feel as if I had been a living fraud all these years!" she said, piteously; "nothing about me was true, not even my name!"

"Don't grieve," said Mr. Ashwin, kindly;

"indeed, you have no cause. It seems to me, Miss St. John, your future is a very fair one, fairer far than your cousin's."

Bee recollected the fragments of conversation she had overheard.

"Do you mean that Captain Fairfax is my cousin, Mr. Ashwin?"

"Yes; he is Sir Reginald now."

"And he has been disinherited for my sake?"

"He has Marshlands, a small country estate, and eight hundred a year, but he had expected Fairfax Castle and its revenues."

"Can't he have them? Couldn't I give them back to him?"

"My dear," returned the old man, touched by her generosity, "he could not take such a gift as your hands; besides, they are not yours to give."

"Whose then?"

Mr. Ashwin looked at her shrewdly.

"Fairfax Castle and its twenty thousand a year will be Sir Reginald's on one condition."

"And that is?"

"That he marries you within three years of his uncle's death."

"It is an insult to us both."

"Hardly that. If you refuse you are amply provided for. Sir Reginald also has enough to make both ends meet. The reason of the bequest was to save him from being married for his money."

"But he is engaged."

"How do you know?"

"I have heard it."

"It was true enough; but Lady Helen Devenish is her mother's true daughter. She gave your cousin his *congé* directly she learned he was not the heir of Fairfax."

"How he must hate her."

"I think he hates all women at present. He will throw himself into his professional duties, and try to forget the sex exists. As to Fairfax Castle, have you no curiosity to know the fate of the grand old place if you and your cousin decline to be one?"

"We shall decline."

"Then Fairfax passes to the eldest son of Sir Reginald or yourself on his majority."

"I hope I shall never see him."

"Whom?"

"Sir Reginald."

"I don't think there is the least chance of it," said Mr. Ashwin, cheerfully. "To tell you the truth, he indulges in a fixed belief you are dead."

Bee laughed, she really could not help it. It was the first bit of levity into which she had been betrayed. The idea of Captain Fairfax jumping to such a conclusion seemed preposterous.

"Would that change things?"

"It would ensure the estates to Sir Reginald's son."

"He is quite sure of them now; I shall never marry. Why, I was twenty-four the other day, and I have never had an offer."

"I am surprised to hear it."

"The fact is I know no gentlemen, and my mother had a strange dread of my marrying. I think Uncle Will is like her; they both disapproved of young men and—that sort of thing."

"Did they?" said Mr. Ashwin, much amused.

"Well, if ever the right young man turns up I hope you will have the courage to renounce their advice; and, as your father's tried and trusted friend, I hope you will allow me to draw up the settlement!"

Bee smiled.

"I may safely promise that."

"I am very glad we have met," went on the lawyer, warmly; "and, Miss Fairfax—I must call you so for once—remember this interview need not change the happy plans you have made for a peaceful home with your uncle. You must keep me informed of your address, and sign a formal receipt twice a year when I send your dividend, and really I think that's all the trouble that will devolve upon you for being an heiress."

Bee smiled.

"You say you loved my father! For his sake will you promise me one favour?"

"A dozen if I can."

"One will be all-sufficient—never mention this interview to my cousin."

"I'm afraid I must; you see, it will be necessary to tell him I have seen you."

"Then I can change the form of my request; never tell him the name I bear, or that I am the niece of William Carlyle."

"Ah, that I can promise you readily, though I confess I cannot guess your motive."

She blushed.

"I fancy Uncle Will and I shall travel. Wide as is the world, chance meetings are always happening. Should we come across Sir Reginald in our wanderings I think I should sink into the earth with shame if he knew I was the wife his uncle had intended for him."

"I wish you could meet."

"We shall not; it isn't in the least likely. I am only guarding against improbable emergencies by my request. But I have your promise, and now I am content."

"And I have yours."

"I really forgot which."

"That I should draw up your marriage settlements. Remember, Miss Fairfax, I shall hold you to your word."

She smiled.

"That promise is never to be fulfilled, because there never will be any settlements. Wouldn't it do as well if I promised you should make my will?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"I hope I shall be gathered to my fathers long before you have to contemplate that step."

"I have always wished to die young," said Bee, thoughtfully; "I never could see any good in growing old."

"Wait."

She had risen to go; he took the girl's hand in his, and looked gravely into her face.

"You are very like your father."

"Am I?"

"And yet I can trace a resemblance to your mother. My dear, I hope your fate may be happier than hers; and remember, Miss Fairfax,

if ever I can be of any use to you you have only to summon me—a line would bring me to your aid at any time."

"Thank you," she said, earnestly. "Remember, Mr. Ashwin, I trust you entirely—I am sure you will not forget your promise."

He was gone; the clock chimed five, and Mary Fairfax, alias Beatrice St. John, started up; not one of her preparations was made, and at any moment now her uncle might arrive to bear her away.

She rang the bell, and told the landlady of the change in her life. She paid a fortnight's rent in lieu of notice; it seemed an earnest of her future wealth to be able to give the kind, poverty-stricken widow a handsome present out of the pile of sovereigns Uncle Will had left her.

Then the packing began. Bee took with her nothing but her scanty wardrobe and a few memories of her mother—everything else she left for the landlady's benefit. By dint of great haste and plenty of assistance from the widow Bee contrived to lock the second trunk as Uncle Will, half-an-hour behind time and in a desperate hurry, stopped at the door in the very same fly which had brought him in the morning, and which his niece firmly believed he had kept in his service the whole day.

"That is over," said Uncle Will, as the man sprang to the box and drove them rapidly away from Malcolm-street. "Bee, it shall not be my fault, child, if I don't make you happy."

Bee smiled a little wistfully.

"I am sure to be happy with you, dear."

And then he went on to tell her of the house he had taken for her at Kew—a tiny, bijou villa, with gardens sloping down to the silvery waters of Father Thames. There was a basket-carriage left and a pair of cream-coloured ponies, just the thing for Bee to drive about in. The old traveller was as delighted as a child, and in his enjoyment Bee almost forgot the exciting interview that had just taken place.

One thing she longed to know and could not bring herself to ask—had Uncle Will ever heard the real name of his sister's husband?

Even this was to come to her. After dinner, which was served in their private sitting-room, Mr. Carlyle inscribed his name in the hotel visitors' book. He hesitated just a little, and then wrote "William Carlyle and niece."

"I wish I could give you a name, child," he said, half sadly, as he laid down the pen. "Beatrice Carlyle would have a pretty sound, and as 'tis I can never hear thee spoken to without thinking of the wretch who broke thy mother's heart."

"His name was not St. John."

"It must have been."

"Why?"

"I was away five years. When I came back the tragedy of your mother's life was over. I left her Miss Carlyle, I found her Mrs. St. John."

"I know it is not my father's name; my mother called herself St. John when she went upon the stage; and she went back to it afterwards because, like you, she could not bear any sound that reminded her of my father."

"I am very glad; I shall like it better now. Beatrice St. John! It has a pretty sound."

"When shall we go to Kew, uncle?"

"Not till next week; we've a heap to do first, Bee. There are two women-servants left and a boy to look after the ponies, but I think you ought to have a maid."

"Please not," said Bee, laughing; "Indeed, there would be nothing for her to do."

"I would rather," said Mr. Carlyle, in his stately manner; "you know I feel responsible to your mother, Bee. You are under my protection now."

And so, for very affection's sake, Beatrice yielded the point. An advertisement was inserted in the *Times*, and "young persons" waited on her at the hotel between ten and eleven. The third applicant impressed her favourably. She was a pleasant-mannered girl, and confessed a preference for a country life.

"You see, ma'am," she said simply, "I'm not used to late hours. I'm in Lady Carteret's service now, and it's four most mornings before I'm

in bed. I have to sit up for Lady Helen and then undress her, and my health won't stand it."

"And that is the only reason for your leaving?"

"Not quite, ma'am"—and the girl blushed. "I'd never been in a grand family before, and I didn't know it was the custom to pay the wages only once a year. I went to the Countess in March, and I looked for my five pounds last week, which was quarter day, but Lady Helen said better-class people never paid their servants but once in twelve months, and if that didn't suit me I had better leave."

"I think you will do for me," said Bee, brightly; "and I shall pay you once a month, I suppose I can have a character from Lady Carteret?"

"Yes, ma'am; the Countess said she would see any lady between eleven and twelve."

"I shall have time to go this morning," decided Bee, a little interested in a visit to the house of those so intermingled with her own history.

She knew already that Lady Carteret had been her father's curse and her mother's destroyer. It was passing strange she should be, through her father's will, the means of disappointing that lady's daughter of her fiancé.

Bee thought privately Lady Helen must be very like her mother, or she would not have let mere money matters come between her and Rex.

Conscious that here were people who judged by appearances, Bee dressed herself in one of the new dainty toilettes provided for her by her uncle's kindness. Mr. Carlyle had spent a week in Paris, apparently for the express purpose of buying pretty dresses for his niece.

Attired in a delicate French cambric, trimmed with quantities of real lace, a shady hat with drooping ostrich feathers, Miss St. John looked her best.

It was early, so early that Lady Helen had not cared to make a toilet when she appeared. She looked sallow, unhealthy, and—It must be confessed—untidy. Her soiled wrapper would not bear inspection by the side of Bee's snowy embryo; late hours, excitement, and perpetual bothers over money matters made her features look worn and sharp. Bee, who had heard of her as a queen of beauty, was greatly disappointed.

Lady Helen was perfectly civil; indeed, amiable for her. She said Emma Molland was a steady, respectable girl, but very stupid and over-scrupulous. She would doubtless do well in the country; she was not in the least suited for a fashionable life.

"It must be very wearing," said Bee, involuntarily.

Lady Helen stared. She recognised the faultless Parisian costume, the easy, high-bred manner; surely this tall, graceful maiden did not wish to imply she did not move in fashion's circle?

"Are you a stranger in London?" she asked, graciously. "I do not think I have met you in society!"

"I have lived in London three years, but my mother's delicate health, and then her death, combined to keep me very much at home."

Lady Helen threw up her hands.

"You could live in London and do without gaiety and amusement? Miss St. John, you must be a stoic!"

Bee smiled.

"I think," she said, gently, "we may pay too high a price even for gaiety and amusement."

Those words rang in Helen's ears when she was left alone, for almost similar words had been spoken by her lover not many days before.

The afternoon following his uncle's funeral found Rex at Lady Carteret's. He sent in his name, Sir Reginald Fairfax, and the servant ushered him into a tiny retreat, where Helen sat alone expecting him. Very pleasant did the announcement fall upon her ears. To them "Sir" had a far more welcome sound than the simple Captain.

"Oh, Rex, how could you stay away from me so long!"

"Have you missed me, darling?"

"Horribly!"

"Well, I am here now, and I pray it may be

long, before we have another parting. Nell, I have some bad news for you."

"Bad news!"

He had drawn her nearer to himself. He was looking at her with a wealth of tenderness in his deep blue eyes.

"You love me, Nell, don't you?"

"You know I do."

"Well enough to bear a little trouble for my sake! Nell, I left you the heir to twenty thousand a year; I come back a poor man."

Helen started. She raised her head from his shoulder; she would have released herself from his embrace, but the clasp of his arms was all too close.

"Sir Isaac can't have disinherited you!"

"He has."

Helen was positively silent. The very immensity and suddenness of the calamity made her speechless.

"But we shall have enough for comfort," went on Rex, hopelessly, "though riches and grandeur are out of the question. My uncle has left me a country house called Marshlands and eight hundred a year. Plenty for a simple home-life, Nell."

Nell thought otherwise. It was the exact amount of her mother's jointure, and never within her recollection had Lady Cartaret called it plenty.

She was too angry to try to conceal her disappointment. The mask of disinterestedness she had always assumed before Rex dropped with a vengeance now.

"I call it wicked!" she cried, bitterly. "What right had Sir Isaac to give it out that you were his heir, and go deceiving people in this fashion!"

"I don't think he ever gave it out that I was his heir," returned Reginald, gravely.

"Well, I'm sure we always thought so."

"Nell," he said, passionately, "do you mean that this will make any difference to you?"

"It must," she returned, snappishly, "all the difference in the world."

"You cannot go to Court, or have an opera-box, or spend as much as we expected; but with my pay we should have about twelve hundred a year. Nell, don't you think you could be happy on that with me?"

"No."

"It would be enough for comfort," persisted Rex. "You would not have to pinch or scrape. We could live as gentlefolks without fear of debt, and, Nell, we should have each other. Don't you care enough for me to give up a few of luxuries we had hoped to enjoy?"

"It would be beggary."

His manner changed.

"It would not; it would be sufficient for a simple domestic life. You would need to do nothing derogatory to your rank; and, oh! Helen, my love should stand between you and all trouble!"

"It is impossible," said Helen, stiffly, extricating herself at last from his embrace.

"And that is your answer!"

"It is."

"You have not thought of my disappointment—of my broken hopes!"

"You will get over it. I wasn't made for poverty or domesticity, Rex. You would be perfectly wretched if you married me on a small income. I have not been brought up to be useful. Excitement and pleasure are as necessary to me as the air I breathe."

"You may pay too dear a price for them."

"I am sorry to disappoint you, Sir Reginald, but you have your uncle to thank. He should not have placed you in such an absurd position."

"Yes, I have him to thank," said Rex, slowly. "I understand his meaning now. Well, he has hid his wish. I am saved from being married for my money."

The last words were spoken in such a low tone that they hardly reached her ear; she only replied to the first part of the sentence.

"It is Sir Isaac's fault entirely, Sir Reginald. Any girl in the world who had been entrapped into an engagement blindfold like this would do as I do and demand her freedom."

"You have it," said Rex, bitterly, "and I pray

from the bottom of my heart a day may never come when you regret your decision. You have cast my honest love from you with scorn. You think the affection of a man's whole heart worthless. Lady Helen, I offer you no reproach; I only trust you may never regret the moment when you sacrificed us both to your cruel ambition."

He did not offer to shake hands with her; he did not even wait for an answer. He walked out of the room, opened the hall door and passed into the street—one page in his life closed for ever.

"He will marry Miss Fairfax, and unite the estate and title," said the Countess, when Sir Isaac's will became public. "Of course, it is a good thing for him, but I consider you have been treated abominably, my dear."

"It doesn't matter," said Helen, coldly. "We are not likely to meet Sir Reginald and his bride; our paths in life lay wide enough apart."

But a sigh accompanied her words, and the Countess looked up sharply.

"Surely, Helen, you are not mad enough to regret your decision. What would your life have been with eight hundred a year and a dozen children—poor people always have enormous families."

"I regret nothing," said Helen, coldly, "except that all the wearisome work has to begin again, mamma. I am quite willing to take up the dreary task again, only remember one thing, I will not listen to discussions about my affair with Sir Reginald Fairfax; his name is never to be mentioned between us, whether it ended well or ill; whether we have done right or wrong I decline to argue. Let things be as they would have been if Mrs. Burn had never introduced him to us."

And the Countess, astonished at her daughter's imperious commands, meekly promised obedience; but the idea came to her and sank deeply in her mind that whatever heart a fashionable education had left remaining in Lady Helen's aristocratic breast had been given to the young Captain.

CHAPTER III.

It was more than a year since Sir Isaac's death, and his nephew was almost forgotten by fashionable London. A baronet with only eight hundred a year and a captain's pay was not worth remembering in good society; besides, Sir Reginald had quite deserted his old haunts from the moment he knew that Helen was false to him, that he had staked his happiness on her truth—and lost. He eschewed all festive scenes. He was popular as ever with his brother officers. Among men he was his old self, gay, cheerful, and sympathetic, but he never willingly met a woman. He seemed to have become a misanthrope as far as the fair sex was concerned.

"It's no use your talking, Ashwin," he said one August evening when he had been entertaining the old lawyer at Marshlands, the only place where he could wield a seigneur's authority now. "What you say may be very true. I dare say it is folly to despise all women for the sake of one, but you don't know how I believed in her. I thought Helen would be constant through all adversity."

"You will marry and forget her."

"I am not good at forgetting."

"Well, you'll marry, and not forget her."

"I am not in the least likely to marry. I am sufficiently proud to refuse to wed any but gentle blood, and no lady would demean herself by attempting housekeeping on eight hundred a year. Don't look so troubled, old friend; there are more things in life than love and marriage, and I don't doubt a bachelor's lot has many advantages."

Mr. Ashwin sighed.

"It's very strange," he said, speaking aloud, almost unconsciously. "I'm an old man, and I've no children of my own to plan marriages for. It does seem hard the only two people I have to be interested in should both exhibit such a strange aversion to wedded bliss."

Sir Reginald laughed.

"What! have you another misanthrope on your hands? Who is he? You might introduce him to me, sir, then we could console each other on your match-making tendencies."

"I should not think of performing such an introduction, Sir Reginald."

"Why! Is he a very grand personage, quite above associating with a pauper baronet? You might confide his name to me, Ashwin, and trust to my honour not to foist myself upon his notice."

"You are talking at random, Sir Reginald. The friend I referred to was a young lady."

"In—dead!" Rex laughed wickedly. "I didn't know you went in for young lady friends. I suppose she is a blighted being who, having loved and been disappointed, like myself, declines to try her luck a second time."

"Certainly not."

"She is doubtless waiting for a noble partner."

"She does not mean to accept any partner. I saw her yesterday and began to reason with her; but she only smiled, and told me she was happier than most of the married people of her acquaintance."

"Quite a philosopher! Dare I ask her name?"

"Beatrice St. John."

"Beatrice St. John! It sounds too romantic for a young lady with such peculiar views. How old is she?"

"Under thirty."

"And an heiress!"

"She lives with an old uncle. I know nothing of his circumstance, but expect she will come in for a trifle at his death."

"Strong-minded female! May it be enough to keep her in strong tea and tracts. Don't worry over her foibles, Mr. Ashwin; you look quite bothered. You had better devote your energies to finding my unknown cousin, Mary Fairfax. Who knows, as you are such a determined match-maker, you might succeed in marrying her after your own heart! It would be a sort of consolation for your failures with me and Miss St. John."

"I have quite given up seeking Miss Fairfax."

"You are coming round to my opinion that she is dead."

"I am not; but I see no particular object in discovering her. You are determined not to marry her, so what is the use in finding her?"

"I am a great trouble to you," said Rex, dropping his laughing tone, and speaking with honest regret. "Do you know, Ashwin, I think my uncle's will has caused as much worry to you as to anyone."

"Lady Helen Devenish would not agree with you."

"Don't speak of her by that name. Don't you know she was married six weeks ago at St. George's, Hanover square, to a cotton millionaire."

"Really!"

"He was fifty-five," said Rex, dryly, "and his hair was scarcely his. No, scoundrel; but he had gold enough to atone for these shortcomings, and to shed sufficient lustre upon the homely name of Johnson as to induce Lady Helen to accept it."

"I am very glad she is married."

"Are you? Did you live in dread of her resenting and recalling me? I dare say I shall meet her next week. The happy pair are travelling in Germany, and you know I start to-morrow for a tour up the Rhine."

"You don't seem alarmed at the prospect."

"I think I can survive it. I mean to be famous yet, Ashwin. Perhaps, when my name is great in the artistic world, I shall forgive Lady Helen for her prudence."

"It is wonderful how you've taken to painting lately," admitted the lawyer. "I shouldn't wonder if you made quite a tidy income by your pictures in a few years' time."

"Don't!" said Rex, with mock horror, "don't be so mercenary. I don't want money, I only want ambition—fame. You know, a love of art is almost an inheritance in the Fairfax family."

But for my being cut out of the Castle I might never have discovered I was born to be a painter."

"It seems to me," said Mr. Ashwin, ponderingly, "men are no better than women."

"Did I ever say they were! But what has reduced you to such a sad conclusion?"

"When women don't marry they start a hobby. Well, it seems to me that's just what you've done."

"Has Miss St. John a hobby?"

"If she has it suits her," was the enigmatical reply. "She's a good-hearted, honest-minded woman!"

Rex pictured a tall, angular spinster of twenty-nine, with the scantiest wiry red hair and the smallest of grey eyes. This party doubtless wore a poke bonnet and a rusty black dress, and the hobby so suited to her must be that of delivering tracts—no other could be so congenial.

"Well, I start to-morrow, Ashwin, and I shall be gone several weeks, perhaps three months; if you hear anything of Miss Fairfax during my absence you might let me know!"

The lawyer nodded.

"And don't fret yourself over my and Miss St. John's delinquencies!"

"I'm not likely to do that; there's no use in it. You had better leave me your address."

"Post Restante, Düsseldorf, until you hear to the contrary. I shall keep very much in one place I expect, and make short excursions from it. I have three months' leave of absence, so don't be surprised if I wait till November to return!"

Mr. Ashwin wrote a foreign letter the next day. It was a very short one. He had been introduced to Mr. Carlyle by his niece as a "friend who had known her mother," and the result was that a strong intimacy had sprung up between the two elderly gentlemen; and Mr. Ashwin felt no scruple at asking a favour of the returned emigrant.

"A young friend of mine, Reginald Bertram, will soon be passing through your neighbourhood on a sketching tour. He is a fine young fellow, and any kindness you can show him I shall regard as a personal favour. Tell Miss Bee you need not fear my thoughts were on match-making, for my artist friend has almost as strong an objection to such things as herself."

The lawyer rubbed his hands when he had sent that letter to the post.

"There," he said, with a grin of triumph, "I think that's a good stroke of business; they're safe to meet now, and surely as they don't know, what a remarkably wise thing it would be to fall in love with each other. They may be trusted to do it. I shall have a lot to answer for to old Carlyle, though, if they do."

The cottage at Kew had been a great success. Mr. Carlyle and his niece spent four happy months there, then they came to London for the winter, and went abroad in the end of May.

Beatrice and her uncle lived in a simple, unpretentious fashion; they kept no company, maintained no style or ceremony, but wherever they were they managed to enjoy themselves and secure a very fair share of amusement; and so far from exceeding their means in the twelve months they had been together, they had spent little more than half the yearly interest on Mr. Carlyle's fortune.

It was Bee's doing they came abroad. She had always been fond of art; now that her time was her own she wanted to devote a good deal of it to her painting. Mr. Carlyle was just the kind of man to enjoy the scrambling, diverting life of an Englishman abroad, so the two pitched their tent in a very pretty little house in a quiet German town, and proceeded to enjoy themselves—Bee by spending many an hour in the lovely scenery adjacent to their home and trying to reproduce its beauties on canvas, Mr. Carlyle by cultivating an intimate acquaintance with all sorts of German dishes and making a list (short) of those he liked, and another (copious) of those "not fit to set before a pig."

They had been engaged at these occupations quite three months when Mr. Ashwin's letter arrived. Uncle Will put on his spectacles and read it leisurely through; Bee peeped over his shoulder, and took in the gist at a single glance.

"Mr. Bertram! It's a pretty name, but we don't want him. Let's have a bad memory, Uncle Will, and forget all about this letter."

"Why, dear!"

"He's a young man," said Bee, severely, "and you know we both dislike young men!"

"But Mr. Ashwin says he's nice!"

"That makes it worse! He'll be a kind of model young man, and I detest prize!"

"Perhaps he won't come to Wengeldorf?"

"Perhaps he won't. We won't look at the arrival lists, Uncle Will, and whenever any one wants to tell us anything about artists we won't pretend to hear; then, even if the prodigy does come, we need not know anything about it."

And when a month passed, and they never heard the name of Bertram, they began to believe themselves secure from any demands upon their hospitality.

It was a lovely September day, and Bee had sallied forth with her easel. She was sitting on a camp stool on the top of a hill whence the silver Rhine lay sheltered before her in dreamy beauty.

Bee was painting the river as it appeared from that lonely hill. She meant to call her picture a "Peep of Rheingland."

Some cows browsing in the distance were the only traces of life. The sunshine fell upon the waters, the brown tint of the foliage, the dead leaves upon the ground—all fitted in with her fancy, and, absorbed in her subject, she worked quickly and well.

Bell loved painting dearly. What a contrast between her life now, when she needed only to exercise her slender fingers to please her own fancy, and the days when she had to work hard, early and late, to keep body and soul together!

It was a very different Bee from the girl Uncle Will had found in Malcolm-street. She looked younger and stronger. She had been pretty as a delicate fragile flower then; she was lovely now, with all the radiance of health and happiness.

The breeze fell upon her soft hair, and stirred its waves from their keeping; her cheeks were round and coloured with a sweet, carnation bloom and her dark blue eyes were still full of a deep, thoughtful tenderness.

She was no longer the lonely, overtasked worker in Malcolm-street. Those days had left their mark on her. You saw this in the pathos of her expression, the wistfulness of her changing smile. Sorrow had added a charm to her face no after-years of prosperity could ever quite destroy.

She was so engrossed in her own work that she never saw another easel raised almost by the side of hers, never noticed that another artist seemed desirous of conveying that bright scene to canvas.

She worked on unceasingly until some big drops of rain fell upon her face. The sky seemed to have turned dark and lowering. Clearly they were going to have a storm.

Bee's first thought was her picture. When she had arranged her mackintosh so as to form a kind of tent over that, she really did not very much mind how furiously the rain came down. Umbrella she had none; and her cloak being sacrificed to her canvas, she was fairly at the mercy of the elements.

"Allow me."

She looked up. A young man was standing at her side with an open umbrella.

She shook her head.

"You will get wet yourself."

"Not at all; I have my overcoat."

She hesitated.

"Let us share it, then," said Sir Reginald, with that strange smile of his that used to be thought so charming before his change of fortune; "there is plenty of room beneath it for two heads."

Bee laughed.

"Thank you," she said, frankly. "I shall be glad not to get wet, for this is only a shower,

and I want to do another hour's work before I go home."

"You are staying at Wengeldorf?"

"Oh, yes; we have a house here for the summer."

"It seems a pretty place."

"It is lovely. I don't think I ever enjoyed anything so much as the scenery here."

"You are fond of painting?"

"I love it dearly. My one ambition is to exhibit at the academy."

"I don't think you will have to wait long, judging by the canvas I saw this morning."

She blushed.

"If I only dared to hope so!"

"You mean to make art your profession?"

"Yes—if I can."

Rex took the words to mean she was ambitious of earning her bread by her brush; that, beautiful and gently born as she evidently was, she yet needed to earn her living. He felt a great regret and pity for her. He forgot she was a young lady; he looked on her as a brave girl struggling nobly.

"You will succeed," he said, kindly; "I wish I felt as sure of myself."

"And are not you?"

"I am like you. I love art dearly, but I have another profession, and I find the claims of the two conflicting at times."

"Art brooks no rival," said Bee, simply; "she must have all or nothing."

It came to Rex as a sudden revelation that Art had little chance of being all to this girl long. She was so beautiful, there was such a charm in her face and manner, she would never be left to lead a lonely life; sooner or later Love would claim her as his victim.

"Are you here alone?" he asked, suddenly.

He could see her ungloved hand, but it was doubled, so that he was not sure the third finger was bare of rings. Of course it was nothing to him, nothing in the world, only he did feel curious to know whether she bore the emblem of a fiancée.

"Oh, no! my uncle is with me; we could not be separated. He doesn't like the place quite so well as I do, but he is very happy here. He is studying German dishes; I accuse him of a design to bring out a new cookery book when we go home, but he says he is only learning what to take and what to avoid."

Rex smiled.

"I am sure 'home' means England. You must be English from your face."

"Home means England, but I don't think I am English."

"Aren't you sure about it?"

"No," and she shook her head dolefully; "both uncle and I are ignorant in points of law. Now I was born in America; doesn't that make me a Yankee?"

"I cannot enlighten you, but I believe not."

"I had rather be English."

They were interrupted; a tall, weather-beaten man had come up to them, and was looking at Bee with a surprised face.

"It has been raining, Uncle," said Bee, perceiving for the first time the storm was over, "and this gentleman has kindly been giving me the shelter of his umbrella."

"I am much obliged to you, sir," said Mr. Carlyle, bowing courteously to the stranger. "Bee, I heard some bad news in the market, so I thought I would come and tell you, child."

Rex lingered, he hardly liked to go without some sort of farewell; so, much as he disliked to seem an eavesdropper, he kept his place.

"What is it?" said Bee, with the careless hopefulness of those who have little to fear.

"It's all my fault," said Mr. Carlyle, penitently; "I met Mrs. Jones and began to talk to her. I quite forgot you told me not to listen to any news."

Bee's face took a comic expression of dismay.

"I can guess the rest," she said, pathetically. "Mr. Bertram has come."

"Yes."

"How could you let her tell you, Uncle Will?" said his fair mentress, severely. "There is no help for it now; we shall have to know him."

"Perhaps he won't stay long."

Bee shrugged her shoulders.

"The mischief is done now we know he is here. After that of course you must call on him at once; we couldn't be rude to a friend of Mr. Ashwin's. Go now, there's a dear. I suppose you had better invite him to dinner. Oh I hope he isn't very young. Mr. Ashwin needn't have told us about him."

Mr. Carlyle departed; the sun had come back, Bee returned to her painting. Rex bewildered at hearing himself discussed under his nom de plume, had retreated to his own easel, wondering if he ought at once to proclaim his own identity, and thus save Bee's uncle a useless call.

The two artists left off painting at the same time; both had to walk down the hill, and Mr. Bertram once more advanced to Bee and begged to be allowed to carry her easel.

"Thanks," she said, lightly; "I fear it is giving you a great deal of trouble."

"Not in the least," they were fairly on the way now. "Will you pardon me if I say something? I could not help overhearing some of your conversation, and I fear, through my kind friend, Mr. Ashwin's, mistaken zeal, I have already been a great nuisance to you and your uncle."

"You can't mean—"

"Only that I am Reginald Bertram."

Bee came to a dead stop.

"Oh dear, what can you think of us!"

"Nothing very dreadful."

"You see," said Bee, speaking very fast, "I never saw a young man—to speak to, I mean—in my life, and Uncle Will has been in Australia a great deal and doesn't know much about young men, and so—"

"And so," persisted Rex.

"When we got Mr. Ashwin's letter we didn't know what in the world to do. We live very simply, and we are quite behind the world. We thought the grand stuck-up young man would consider an introduction to us a great infliction. At last we came to the conclusion we would try not to know when he came."

"I assure you I am neither grand nor stuck-up. I have very few friends, and it would have been a real pleasure to me to see something of people who know dear old Ashwin so well; but don't be afraid, I won't be any trouble to you and your uncle."

"Mr. Bertram, you are quite misunderstanding me. If you will take us as you find us, and not turn up your nose at colonial ways, and my *gaucheries*, we shall be delighted to see you. Mr. Ashwin is a great friend of mine. He may have mentioned my name to you—Beatrice St. John."

"You can't be Miss St. John."

"I am."

"Then it must be another Miss St. John he told me of. It couldn't be you."

"Why not?"

"He said you were under thirty, and a woman with a hobby. I drew a picture of a gaunt, angular female, with a mania for lecturing on woman's rights. He never contradicted me when I said so."

Bee was laughing.

"I think we had better have an act of mutual oblivion. I'll forget the unflattering portrait you drew of me if you'll try and not remember the horror with which uncle and I anticipated your arrival."

(Continued on page 136.)

THAT TIRED ALL GONE FEELING

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DOLLY'S LEGACY.

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CHAPTER VI.

To go back to an afternoon some weeks before Viscount Devereux and his friends went down to Field Royal, a cold, bleak, January day, before the remains of poor Mrs. Smith had been laid to rest in Brompton cemetery.

The wind blew keenly; there was no winter sunshine to brighten the leaden sky; there was something terribly depressing in the thick, heavy atmosphere, and people seemed to find this out, for very few pedestrians were to be seen in the fashionable quarter of London.

One man, however, who evidently belonged to the upper ten thousand, was walking across St. James's Park at a brisk pace, making evidently for the direction of Victoria Station. He stopped at a large flower shop not three minutes from the terminus, and purchased a huge bunch of violets, bordered with fresh green ferns, just a delicious reminder that in spite of the present cold, bleak winter in a few months the spring sunshine would be pouring warm and genial rays upon the earth.

He was a handsome man, past his first youth, but still in the prime of youth, a man whose face you had but to look into to trust; whose dark brown eyes inspired confidence; a tall, stately man, with a thorough English walk, whom all dumb animals loved, and little children clung to instinctively, as though they felt he was their friend.

He took the flowers in his hand and walked quickly on, looking at them from time to time with almost tender admiration.

"They are like her," he muttered to himself. "The moment I saw her I recalled the flower Viola used to call her own; and she is like Viola, too—as like as a child can be to her mother. I wonder what Mrs. Smith is like? What a fool I am to dwell upon the mad idea that haunts me! I wish I had gone in the other night and solved the problem for myself. One look in the face and I must have known whether I saw Viola. Seventeen years could make no change in her past my recognition. What a fool I am!" he resumed, after a pause. "Nearly eighteen years ago I loved a woman who had no thought but for her husband. I have never seen her—I have believed her dead; and yet the sight of a pair of violet eyes, the thrill of a girlish voice, has had power to bring my old dream back to me, and make me forget the flight of time."

He was knocking at the door of a house in Elizabeth-street now, and soon a tidy widow woman came to answer it, much surprised at his aristocratic appearance.

"Can I see Mrs. Smith?"

The woman stared.

"She don't live here, sir."

For a moment he hesitated. He knew this was the house where he parted from Dolly. Could that fair-haired girl have been a deceiver, and the story she told him have been one long falsehood?

"I can't understand it," he said to the woman, smiling kindly at her, as though to ask her aid. "I am sure this is the number I was told. I am seeking a Mrs. Smith with one daughter, engaged in dress-making."

The woman's face cleared of the suspicious expression it had borne, and she seemed even more bewildered.

"You seem to know all about her, sir."

The gentleman felt more and more puzzled.

"I had the pleasure of seeing the young lady home," he said, slowly, "one evening a little before Christmas, and I told her then I hoped to call soon and have some conversation with her mother."

Mrs. Brown looked at him steadily.

"You don't mean her any harm, sir! Mrs. Smith was a decent woman, and if she owed you money I'm sure she'll pay some day."

"My good creature," cried the stranger, "Mrs. Smith does not owe me a halfpenny. My sole object in seeking her out is that I may offer her assistance."

Mrs. Brown stared.

"It's the strangest thing I ever heard of! I don't see why I shouldn't speak out; you don't look like one who'd turn round on me."

"I assure you," said her companion, "I shall be grateful to you for any information, and I will not repeat anything you tell me."

"Come in, sir, out of the draught," she said, hospitably.

She took him into the front parlour, the very room where Dolly had told her story to her mother.

"Mrs. Smith did live here, sure enough, sir, and a good, honest woman she was. She was with me nigh on a year, and she left all in a hurry about three weeks ago."

"Left; but you said she never was here!"

"I am coming to that, sir. The night you saw Miss Dolly home—I mind it well, for cabs don't often stop at this house—Mrs. Smith was up to near midnight, but she went out the next day, directly after breakfast, leaving her daughter in bed."

"Why are you not at the establishment?" I said to Dolly. She just shook her head, and said her mother 'ad gone, and made her promise not to stir till she came in."

"I darsay Mrs. Smith was gone three hours."

When she got back she called me into this room, and shut the door."

"I'm in a bit of trouble, Mrs. Brown," says she, "and I want you to help me. I owe a bit of money which I can't pay for a month or two, so I think I'd better go away. Make up your bill, and I'll pay a week extra instead of notice; and, as we've always been good friends, perhaps when the gentleman comes to ask for his money you'll tell him it's all a mistake, and no Mrs. Smith lived here," which, in course," concluded Mrs. Brown, "I promised to do, and when I saw you to-day I jumped to it you were the man she expected."

Paul Clifford sighed.

"I am very sorry."

"You want to see her particularly?"

"I am very much interested in her daughter. She had a splendid voice, and I thought with a musical education—"

"You meant to bring her out at one of the 'alls. Law, now!" said Mrs. Brown, "what a pity she's gone! I darsay she'd have made her fortune."

Paul Clifford thought it unnecessary to tell her she was quite mistaken.

"Could you tell me anything about Mrs. Smith that would give me a clue to finding her?"

"I never knew nothing; she was too close."

"How did they live?"

"She mended lace for the shops. A rare hand she was at it."

"I suppose she was a widow?"

"Law, yes, sir, and quite an old one, too. She was much more like the child's grandmother."

"Nice looking?"

"Not a bit. Dolly must have got her good looks from her father; her mother had none. Just a plain-spoken, sensible woman."

"Thank you,"—he slipped a sovereign into her hand. "Pray let me make up for your loss of time."

Mrs. Brown stared with delight. The unexpected gift seemed to quicken her intellect. Paul had not got to the bottom of the street when she came running after him.

"Sir, it's just come to me, all on a sudden, you might hear of Dolly at the establishment."

The idea seemed to Paul Clifford a good one. He took a cab and drove to Madame Marguerite's. We know the disappointment that awaited him. The stately principal was far from being as complaisant as poor Mrs. Brown. She told her visitor frankly she believed she had been taken in.

"Miss Smith no more had the smallpox than I had," continued Madame, indignantly. "If she had would her mother have moved her that very afternoon in the snow! It was nothing but a clever trick to save her from serving the rest of her time."

It looked so much like it that Paul Clifford was speechless. He kept his faith in Dolly, but he did begin to doubt her mother. With such

training in deceit what would be the future of the fair young girl who so reminded him of his first wild love!

"I must apologise for trespassing on your time," he said, rising to depart.

"There's no apology needed, sir. I daresay you were taken in by the girl's pretty face, and took every word she said for gospel. I know I did myself; I'd have doubted any one of my hands rather than Dolly Smith."

"I suppose it would be asking too great a favour to beg you to communicate with me if you should receive any news of her!"

"I expect I've had the last news I'm likely to have," said Madame, sharply. "Two evenings ago, New Year's Night, I saw her."

"Saw Dolly?"

"Yes," said Madame, coolly. "I saw her with my own eyes. I don't think I'd have believed it if anyone else had told it me of her. I always liked the girl; I couldn't think she'd have sunk so low."

Almost beside himself with some strange inward fear, Paul cried out,—

"In the name of Heaven, what was the poor girl doing, madame?"

"Singing."

"Singing!"

"Singing in the streets for alms! Fancy, sir, a girl who had sat here among my young ladies, who had been allowed to assist in making dresses for the nobility!"

Paul Clifford walked away with a strange sadness upon him. He never quite decided what part Dolly Smith would play in his life. He had meant to offer the widow to send her daughter abroad, and defray the whole expense of her musical education.

He had meant never to lose sight of Dolly. He had pictured her as the sunshine of his home, though whether as the child of his old age or the wife of his bosom he did not know; but for old sake's sake, for the memory of his first love, whose face she bore, he had meant to make her future his care.

And now where was she!

Vanished like a shadow, disappeared as utterly and entirely as a snowflake beneath the rays of the noonday sun.

What had become of her? Where was she? Could that last assertion of Madame Marguerite's be true!

Looked at in any light the history was a strange one. These people had been living in Elizabeth-street three weeks ago, apparently settled there for years. Dolly herself had spoken of her work at Madame Marguerite's as only to be quitted to set up for herself in the country.

Yet within four-and-twenty hours mother and daughter had forsaken home, residence, and occupation. What could it mean?

How could he acquit Mrs. Smith of falsehood? Indeed, he could not separate her statements, and tell where truth began and falsehood ended. She seemed even to have gone out of her way to tell untruths.

She might surely have been content with shifting her lodgings without inventing the fable of the small-pox. Then what occasion to fabricate that little history of owing money for Mrs. Brown's ear!

No, the more he thought of it the more perplexed and bewildered Paul Clifford felt, till he could have gone almost to the length of wishing he had not passed down Regent-street that particular December, and so had never seen the eyes who so troubled him.

In that case there would have been no one to rescue her from Lord Devereux. As he pondered over the story one fear would haunt him—had the miserable Dolly accepted the Viscount's protection?

He could not bring himself to believe such cruel shame of those violet eyes, and then these two facts strengthened his confidence in her.

Had she sunk so low as that she would not have needed to sing in the streets; and Lord Devereux's *fiancée* being now in London it seemed impossible he should have had time to pursue his fancy for Dolly.

Paul Clifford had got thus far in his reflections when he met the very person of whom he was thinking—Viscount Devereux. On his arm was Lady Madeline.

She had known Mr. Clifford from childhood, and it was impossible to avoid a meeting. The lovers (?) were bound for the Burlington Arcade, and Paul took it into his head to accompany them.

"This is a more peaceful meeting than our last," said Devereux, lightly, when a lady friend had claimed Madeline's attention.

The Viscount had no intention of bearing malice. He meant to outrage the beautiful singer; but he was a man of the world. He knew that in society he must often meet Paul Clifford, and he could not afford to be on ill-terms with him.

"Yes," shortly.

"Have you seen the bird since?"

Paul looked at him steadily.

"No. Have you?"

"Once."

"Where?" interrupted Paul, quickly. "What was she doing?"

"The usual occupation of a bird—singing!"

Mr. Clifford's eyes flashed one look at him. Devereux laughed lightly.

"I hold my first opinion—it is too pretty a bird to be left in a wild, savage state; but I have not caged it yet. You seem so anxious, I may as well give you that piece of information."

"Jack, what are you talking of?"

Madeline had finished her conversation with her friend, and had overheard her *fiancé's* last words.

"Only about a certain specimen of wild bird I want to tame, which Clifford thinks should be left in its natural condition," was the audacious reply.

"I hate caged birds," said Madeline, gravely. "Poor little prisoners! it makes me sad to look at them!"

"I quite agree with you, Lady Madeline; even the song of a caged bird is like plaintive music!"

"Music does make one sad sometimes," said Madeline, thoughtfully. "I know the other night—"

"Madeline, don't inflict that history on Clifford. You have told everyone a dozen times already!"

"I should like to hear it," interposed Paul. "Tell me what happened the other night."

And she told him the tale we already know.

For weeks after that afternoon Paul Clifford lingered in London. He positively haunted the streets of Kensington. He made inquiries in every direction. He spent money, too; but he found no clue to the girl he sought.

The pretty child to whom for one brief hour he had been father, guardian, and friend seemed to have vanished from the world as completely as though the turbid waters of the river played restlessly over her body.

It was natural that Mr. Clifford should call upon Lord Charteris. He had known the peer intimately before he went to India, and the courtesy was therefore due; but it was strange how, having once been to the handsome house in Kensington, he should find himself a frequent visitor.

Lord Charteris "took" to him at once. He seemed like a relic of his youth. Really he was young enough to have been the Earl's son; but it pleased the latter to treat him as a friend of equal dignity.

"Papa has quite stolen you away," said Lady Madeline to him one afternoon, when he was waiting for the Earl to accompany him to a political meeting. "I wonder what has become of the business that brought you to town!"

"It is at a standstill."

"Why?"

She had never seen such earnestness in his manner, never seen such suppressed passion in his voice, as when he answered her.

"Because the corner-stone of the whole is lost, that for which I planned and hoped has disappeared."

"I wish you would tell me what the business was."

"Impossible!"

"I want to know."

"I regret I cannot tell you."

"I asked papa the other night, and he said he did not know either!"

"Precisely!"

"So we amused ourselves by guessing."

"Indeed!"

"And I want to know if we guessed right. If I tell you our conjectures, will you say who was correct?"

He bowed ceremoniously, as though in assent.

"Papa declares you have written a book, and are looking for a publisher. Well!"

"The Earl is mistaken."

"She was so long before she spoke again that he asked—"

"And your guess, Lady Madeline?"

"Oh, I thought you were going to be married, and had come up to town to choose fresh furniture, and such things!"

"Your thoughts run on marriage, Lady Madeline!"

"No; they don't!"

"What did your father say to your guess?"

"He said it was about as probable as that he was looking out for another countess. It's not very flattering to you; but papa looks on you as just as old as himself. I believe he imagines you are his twin brother, and he was sixty-five last birthday."

"I cannot boast so many years as that; but I dare say I am what you call an old man."

"You don't seem old," said Madeline, dreamily.

"I shall be forty in June!"

"Don't put it like that," pleaded Madeline, softly; "say you are thirty-nine!"

He laughed.

"Doesn't even that sound venerable to you?"

"No."

Lord Charteris came in then, and the gentlemen started on their expedition. Who would have guessed that when the door had closed upon them the spoiled heiress—the pretty, petted Madeline—went right to her own room, and throwing herself on her bed wept as though her very heart was breaking.

"I love him!" she murmured amid her sorrows. "Oh, how very wicked and unwomanly I must be! He cares no more for me than for the drawing-room table, and I love him with all my heart! He never answered me—never told me if my guess was correct, and he had really come up here to see about his wedding! Oh, how I shall hate his wife! What an idiot I am! What have I ever been to him! Nothing but a troublesome child, to whom he has been kind. Well, he will marry some horrid woman, and I shall be Jack's wife. We shall live close together, I suppose, and the world will expect me and Mrs. Clifford to be great friends! Oh, the misery, the wretchedness of it all! If I could only die soon—only not live till June!"

For as things were now settled Viscount Devereux's wedding was to take place in the month of roses.

Everything has its use in life; the little trifles we think so slightly of are often links in the long chain of circumstances that make up our fate.

The flowers Paul had purchased to give to Dolly, the fragrant violets and fresh green ferns became quite an impediment to him when he left Elizabeth-street and started in the direction of Madame Marguerite's. He would not take them with him; there was something incongruous to his taste in promenading the streets of London with a bouquet in his hand. It was too large to seem other than it had been meant for a floral tribute to a lady. Paul blushed to think what any of his friends would say could they catch sight of him carrying such a burden. So when he turned into a narrow side street leading to Buckingham Palace-road he watched his opportunity, and when no one was passing he tossed the flowers on to the pavement; then he moved quickly on, and never troubled himself as to the fate of the bouquet.

It was picked up by the next person who went

down that narrow street—a woman, well, she had once been that gracious thing—had been beautiful and fair to see not so many years ago, but her charms had departed now. In the flushed, bold face, the eyes so fierce with their glittering stare, in a nameless sort of recklessness that pervaded her whole being; you knew by instinct what she was, and what had made her so.

She took the flowers with a feverish hand, and looked at them more tenderly than she often looked at anything. Then a tear came to her fine back eyes, and she sighed wearily.

"It seems like a bit of home," she said, as though speaking to the flowers; "when I was a girl and used to help my father tend his blooms. I can see the old cottage again, with its quiet lodge, over which Bertie used to bend his handsome head. Oh! how he loved me in those days! I wonder if he'd know me now?"

"I'll take them round to the child," she muttered; "maybe it'll do her good to smell them. Poor little one! she's fading fast away. Well, better that, perhaps, than that she should live to grow such as I am."

She walked on and on, still carrying the flowers, when a heavy fall of sleet came on. It was pitiful to see how she sheltered them under the tattered shawl, as though they must be protected from the wet, whatever happened to herself. She walked a long way; perhaps it seemed further than it was, because she chose out all the narrow, dingy streets, and purposely avoided the broader thoroughfares, but at last she stopped.

It was somewhere in the heart of Chelsea; somewhere in that region of which the boundary on one side is the King's-road and on the other the Fulham-road. Somewhere in that labyrinth of streets, in one narrower than the rest, which, perhaps from irony, has the title Eden-place, the woman stopped. The houses in Eden-place are old; it is emphatically their greatest point. Some day, when the whole neighbourhood was different, they may have been the only small houses to be had for love or money; they boast about eight rooms each, and each room has a separate tenant.

The woman—her name was Madge, she bore no other throughout the "Place"—did not knock at the door, to do so would have been a superfluity, since it stood always open. She mounted the rickety stairs slowly, wearily, till she came to the top. An old man stood on the landing mending shoes; he had probably come out there because it was the lightest place, and the short January day was closing in; but the woman halted him anxiously.

"How is she now, Father Lemon? Not worse, surely. You weren't looking for me?"

"Not I," said the old man, with a cheerful whistle; "she's asleep; leastways she was an hour ago when I looked in to see to the fire. It's burning nicely; a beautiful fire you'll find there."

Burning nicely! Reader, the grate was about the size of your sugar basin, and the bit of fire in it was so minute you did not see (or, what was more to the point, feel) it until you were touching almost the bars. I refuse the adjective "beautiful" to that handful of coals. The room was on the same scale as the fire, furniture to match, an iron bedstead, a chair, and a table; the old-fashioned cupboard, of course, might hold other treasures, but these were the only ones disclosed to view.

The only one? Stay!

On the bed, covered by a thin blanket, was a little girl, a child of five or six, perhaps, but so thin and small she might easily have passed for three; a child whose face made you wonder what she possibly could be doing in such a place, how she possibly could have such a mother!

For the woman who bent over her was her mother; the likeness between the two faces was thrilling, only where the mother's was defiant and repelling the child's was sweet and attractive.

The mother's black hair and dark eyes were repeated in the little girl; but surely Madge could never have had the innocent wistfulness of her daughter! Surely her fallen brow could never have had the purity and serenity of the little girl's!

"Look here, see what mother's brought you!" and Madge eagerly displayed the flowers.

Beautiful violets! How their fragrance brightened the little room!—how the child's dark eyes sparkled as she saw them!

"Who gave them to you, mother?"

"No one; I found them, child."

"How sorry whoever lost them must be; don't you think so, mother?"

Mother didn't answer; she was thinking a little, dreamily, that there were things whose loss no sorrow could bring back, no tears atone for; the loss of something gone long years before was troubling her—the loss of something she had well-nigh left off regretting until the violets taught her.

They were put in water, the bouquet unfettered first to be very sure that every stalk might feel the refreshing moisture. Lena lay with her dark eyes watching them, and then she said, half wistfully,—

"I wish I had a garden. Mother, did you ever have a garden, ever see the flowers grow?"

Rarely did she speak of her past, it was so sad; but her child's question must be answered.

"Oh, yes, Lena; your grandfather was a gardener. I lived in a cottage smothered with roses and jasmine."

"I wish grandfather was alive," breathed the child. "Mother, couldn't we go to that cottage now?"

Madge shook her head.

"Was I born there, mother?"

"No, child; I left the country before you were born."

"With my father!" said Lena, wistfully. "Mother, I do so wonder what he was like; I wish I could have seen him. I have never heard one word of him you know, mother, and yet he was my father."

He was her father, she was his child—the only child who, while the mother lived, had the right to bear his name. He was a rich man, and yet his wife and child lived in beggary. What did it mean!

Madge bustled about and got tea, a very different meal from that we call by the name; a crust of bread, a cup of colourless fluid, that was all; but throughout the repast the child's eyes wandered to the flowers. It was easy to see she loved them more than meat and drink.

"And but for me she might wear velvet and furs," thought the miserable mother; "but for me she might have a happy home. Oh! Lena, my child, my darling, my little comforter, would you ever forgive your mother if you knew all she has robbed you of?"

In the early morning light, wakened by the child's hacking cough, Madge knew at a glance her darling was worse. She dressed herself in her worn clothes and went out in the driving snow to find the parish doctor, the man appointed to cure the poor. There are many tales abroad against those who fill these posts, but there never was a kinder man than Mr. Gibbs. He received the poor outcast with as much courtesy as though she had been a lady. She was a mother in anxiety for her only child; to him that was a title for pity.

"I must give you some medicine," he said, kindly; "but I can't do anything. The child will never be better in London—never!"

"And the country might save her?"

"It might. I do not say it would. Remember, it is but a chance."

Only a chance! But what mother of an only child would leave that chance untried, specially when that child was all she had—her one wee lamb!

"I never asked him for a penny," she muttered to herself; "I swore I never would. But it might save her life, my innocent child, my child and his—my little one who is all I have."

She would not go home, she would not give herself a chance of abirking from her task. She walked straight on—wearily, oh! so wearily—with a heart sinking at what she was about to do. Here was a sad history—the old, old story of woman's frailty, only set to a new setting. The gardener's daughter had been wooed by a man of far higher rank and station, but the wooing had ended in a plain gold ring and a

church ceremony. The black spot in the story was later. They were a totally unsuited pair. She had never loved him truly, and as the first glamour of his passion wore off, and he found this out, he let her see he regretted their union. She drove him to it by her wild, reckless ways. There was a false friend by her ready to fan the flame of jealousy, until at last Magdalen had left her husband—and not alone.

The child was born five months later. She was then penniless, deserted, alone. She never made any appeal to her husband; she never even made known to him the birth of his daughter. He had not chosen to take the freedom the law would have given him. Few people had known of his marriage, and so he went his way supposed to be an eligible bachelor—really a forsaken husband. It was six years and more since she had seen his face, and yet his wife had resolved this day to appeal to his pity.

She knew where he lived. Even in the first days of their married life he had retained his chambers to see his friends and get through business (though being a rich man's only son it was little business he troubled after). She could have found her way to those rooms blindfold. They were in a half-forgotten corner of Fulham. Six years ago they had been almost in the country—even now they had a fresher look than many of the thoroughfares near.

"He will never see me," thought Madge, as she rang the bell with despairing fingers.

But she was mistaken. The middle-aged man who appeared made no attempt to deny his master—he really seemed to have expected his visitor. Madge wondered whether her husband had turned philanthropist, and spent his time in interviewing the poor and ragged!

"Rap at that door and walk in," said the man, coolly, "the master is expecting you."

She obeyed. The voice that said "come in" awoke every slumbering memory in her heart. A moment more, and husband and wife stood face to face. He was eight or nine-and-twenty. She was three years younger, but to look at the two you would have judged her at least ten years older than the handsome, noble-looking man who sat at an easel sketching. He looked up as she entered, gave one start, and rose to his feet—white as death.

"Magdalen!"

"Yes," she said, brokenly, "it is I. Don't speak harshly to me, Bertie, I can't bear it. You must have some idea of my misery by seeing me here. You don't think surely that anything but real want would bring me to you."

He did not speak harshly. Seeing her then as she was, and thinking of her as she had been, an awful remorse filled his heart. Had he failed in any measure in his duty to her? Could it be his fault that she was thus!

"What do you want?"

"Money."

The word cost her an awful effort. But for that little child at home she would have died sooner than ask him for alms.

He asked her one question—asked her in a sad, grave whisper.

She answered promptly,—

"More than six years ago."

"Why didn't you come sooner?"

"I couldn't. I shouldn't have come to-day, only—"

She stopped abruptly.

"I am glad you have," he said, slowly. "I can at least see you want for nothing now. I always meant to make you an allowance."

"To ease your conscience?" tauntingly.

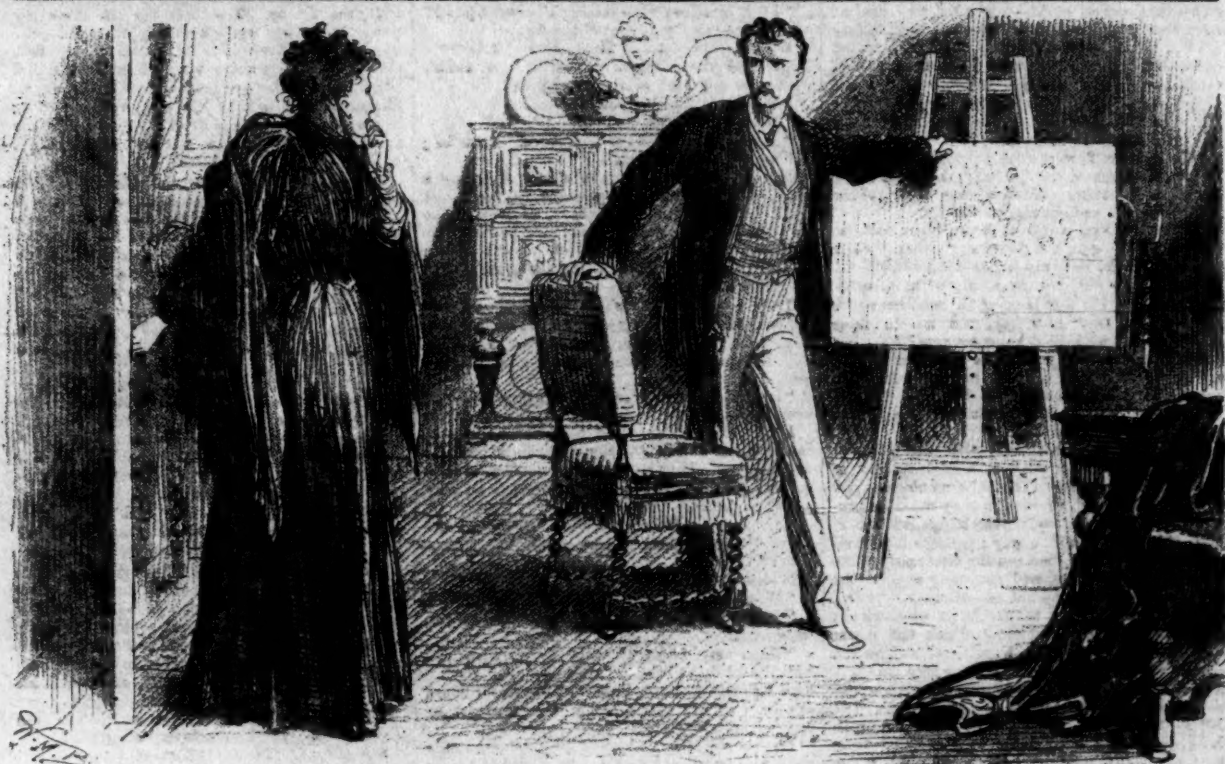
He never answered her. He had taken out his purse, and counted a little pile of sovereigns. He pushed them towards her.

She took one, and pushed the others away.

"Let me have this every week," she said, simply. "A lot of money would be no good to me—it would not do," and she shuddered.

"Where shall I send it?"

She named a library in the Fulham-road where letters were taken in, wrapped her shawl around her, and rose to depart. She never asked him for any promise to send the money. She knew



"YES," SAID MAGDALEN, "IT IS I. DON'T SPEAK HARSHLY TO ME—I COULD NOT BEAR IT!"

this much of the man she had called husband—his word was his bond.

"Good-bye," she said, brokenly. "You have been better to me than I dared to hope for. Bertie, we may never meet again—before I go I wish you'd say you forgive me."

The man's better nature struggled hard with the memory of all he had suffered for and through this woman. The right triumphed.

"I forgive you, Magdalen. You wronged yourself more than me after all."

"Heaven bless him," murmured the woman, who was a wife and yet an outcast, when she was in the bustling streets again, raising her eyes to the wintry sky. "Heaven bless him. If ever I can do him a good turn I will."

But alas! for her good resolution, alas! for them both. She went the wrong way to work him that good turn.

It seemed to Magdalen as she left her husband he must wish for one thing more than aught else—her own death.

"If the child goes," she murmured, sadly, "if this last chance fails, and I have to give up my darling, he'd have his way. I couldn't live without her."

A room in a little snug village close to the Thames, a room as different as possible from that squalid London lodging, a cheerful, respectable landlady, and a pretty garden in front of the house—all this was a new life to the little maid.

And the elder Magdalen, for the child's sake, turned over what she called a "new leaf." She behaved as though she still had a reputation to cherish and maintain.

She conquered the awful longing for drink that assailed her, and beyond one journey every week to that library where the husband sent his bounty, she never left her child.

Landlady, district visitor, clergyman, one and all thought Mrs. Bertram a most devoted mother. Madge had more friends and sympathy now than she had known for many a day; but, alas! the improvement in the child was only fluctuating.

Very soon the doctor had to break to her mother that she was sinking.

Madge received the news in perfect silence; only when she was alone, and no one could hear her grief, the tears ran down her cheeks, and she murmured,—

"It is my life he has condemned as well as hers. All that is best of me will die with my child. I might have tried to redeem the past for her sake. Now, when she is gone, I shall be what I was before."

And that meant a drunkard. Oh! the awful restraint she had to place on herself those last weeks—the fearful effort it cost her to keep up her reformation while the feeble spark of the child's life yet lingered—who can say!

It came to an end at last one night—a quiet evening. Lena put her little thin arms around her mother's neck and whispered,—

"Good-bye. I'm going to father."

Poor little one! fatherless and despaired here. It would not be reckoned against her in the great hereafter that she had suffered for her mother's sins.

One thing astonished the Doctor when he was making out the certificate of death. The mother confessed to him with a trembling lip the name of Bertram was assumed.

"I have had much trouble, sir," she said, sadly, "and I took the name of Bertram that those who knew me in my better days should not find me out, but I shouldn't like my little girl to be buried with a falsehood."

The Doctor thought what a true faithful woman she was, and inserted the name she whispered to him in the space where he had meant to write Bertram.

After the funeral was over Magdalen sold her wedding-ring to compass her child's burial. The mother packed up her few things and departed.

"I couldn't stay here without my child," she told the Rector. "I've been a bad woman, sir. It was just her love kept me straight. I don't care what happens to me now."

But when she got to London her first visit

was to the General Post Office. She carried in her hand an envelope containing the certificate of her child's death. The envelope was addressed to her husband.

"I promised I'd do him a good turn if I could," she murmured. "I've heard of dying for the sake of those we love. I wonder if this is a kind of dying for his sake! He'll never know what it cost me to make him happy. Well, he has suffered enough through me. It's well I should bear something for him at last."

And so on the first of the bright May days she posted her letter—posted it with the most generous, unselfish motives; but, alas! she told a lie—and lies, however well intentioned, never succeed. This one was destined well-nigh to break two hearts.

(To be continued.)

At the Strozzi Palace, in Rome, there is a book made of marble, the leaves being of marvellous thinness.

THE most remarkable book in the world, so far as its appearance is concerned, is neither written nor printed. It is in the National Library of Paris, and the letters are cut out of tissue paper with a pair of scissors. A sheet of blue tissue, in which the letters are cut, is placed between two pages of white, and so the matter is read.

In the province of Oaxaca, in Mexico, a wonderful flower is found, which changes colour three times a day. The first thing in the morning it is snowy white, but becomes tinged with a rosy hue as the sun mounts higher in the sky, and by noon the flower is of a deep crimson colour. Then, as the sun gradually sinks, the flower turns to violet, and finally to deep blue. The Mexicans call it "the blue, white, and red blossom." It is very rare, and grows only under one particular kind of tree. It has no perfume, except at midday.



IN A SECOND NORA WAS SAFE IN HER MOTHER'S ARMS.

THE BRIDE OF AN HOUR.

—201—

CHAPTER XI.

It was a pitiful story that Violet Dean told to Bernard Maxwell. It stirred all the sympathy and chivalry in the young man's heart, but for a long time he could think of no way of helping her. Young as he was, Bernard knew the world. He knew that there was no more difficult task than for a man to really help a woman who was neither sister, wife, or niece—a woman, whom no legal impediment prevented his marrying. Added to this was yet another difficulty. Maxwell was poor and struggling, and knew no lady of ample means who would be likely to take compassion on his *protégée*. As he listened to her story, he thought over all his friends, and could recall no one likely to be of use to her. Situations were hard enough to come by for women who had experience and references. No wonder this poor girl, who possessed neither, had found the struggle all too hard.

"What can you do best?" asked Bernard. "It seems to me, Miss Dean, you have been so unfortunate when you tried for 'anything,' and showed yourself willing to undertake duties quite out of your natural sphere, that you might just as well look on the other side and try to find employment you really liked."

She looked at him wistfully.

"I am passionately fond of music. I think if I could only choose, I would rather play the piano to an invalid than anything."

"Must the audience be an invalid?" asked Bernard, "because, if not, I do believe I have thought of something."

Miss Dean's face caught the brightness of his own as she listened.

It seemed that one of Bernard's friends (he never studied position in choosing his friends—the man was what he looked at, not the rank) kept a large shop not far from Oxford-street, where he not only sold every description of vocal

and instrumental music, but kept a piano or two so that customers might have the songs or pieces played to them before making their decision. The place was really more like a bazaar or fashionable lounge than a music shop, and it was quite the custom for Mr. Nairn's pianist to perform for an hour or two of an afternoon while the customers made their selections. The said pianist was supposed to serve in the shop when not required at the piano, and also to undertake the postal order department. The shop itself was only open from ten till six, but the correspondence took some time, so that the young lady employed had to be in her place by nine o'clock. The salary paid was eighteen shillings a-week and tea.

"It sounds delightful," said Bernard's poor little *protégée*; "but such posts must be rare."

"I suppose so. But I met Nairn yesterday and he was without anyone then. His wife was filling the place temporarily, but she very much disliked leaving her children. Nairn's a capital fellow, Miss Dean; he was brought up to the profession and would have been a first-rate performer, but he met with an accident which obliged him to have two fingers of his right hand amputated. Of course, his career was at an end."

"How terrible for him."

"Yes, it was hard lines. He buckled to manfully. His father had left him three or four hundred pounds, and he spent it all on this shop. He furnished it quite luxuriously, provided books, and newspapers, easy chairs and lounges; then he waited."

"And is the venture a success?"

"Yes. You see there are very few places like it, and then, Nairn, though he's a gentleman by birth, never seems to mind what pains he takes to satisfy people. I have seen him turn over half-a-dozen portfolios to find a song for a girl, and then have it declined because she 'thought it was higher than she could manage,' and yet he kept his temper. He keeps no 'assistants' in the ordinary sense. There's a strong youth to

haul down portfolios, dust the pianos, &c., but all the real work is done by Nairn himself and his pianist."

"And Mrs. Nairn?"

Maxwell smiled.

"She was his first pianist, and he fell in love with her. She kept the post for some time after they were married, but now the business has increased so they can well afford help. She comes down to the shop in the afternoon during the season, and on an emergency, like the present; but she says her right place is at home."

Miss Dean looked anxious.

"If only Mr. Nairn would try me."

"There is no time like the present," said Maxwell, cheerfully; "we'll go and see him at once." Then as he saw the girl's white set face, "you need not be afraid that Nairn will be like some of the people you have seen, Miss Dean. He will treat you as respectfully as though you were a duchess; but in matters musical he is most exacting. I told him once he expected a professional performer for a pittance. The man is a born musician, and careless or inaccurate playing acts on him as a red rag on a bull. I will do my utmost to recommend you, but really it all turns on your musical skill."

"Then I am not afraid," said the girl, quietly, "for I know I can play; I shall be nervous, but if only Mr. Nairn will have patience till that wears off, I have no fear."

The shop (David Nairn called a spade a spade, and so the place where he made his money was a "shop" and not a "gallery of music" or "stall of harmony") was a large building a little west of Oxford Circus, it covered the whole of the ground floor, and consisted of a large room furnished as a drawing-room, save that the walls were lined with shelves for the portfolios of music, of a slip beyond used as a counting-house, which led again into a small parlour, where Mr. Nairn partook of meals and received visits from such friends as wished to see him in private.

It was quite early yet, and the rush of customers had not begun, it being the luncheon

hour of the *Rite*, a pretty stylish-looking woman was showing songs to a rather elderly young lady, and the proprietor himself stood by the fire warming his hands. He came forward with a smile at the sight of Maxwell.

"Business or friendship?" he asked, pleasantly.

"Both, I hope," returned Bernard. "But first let me ask you a question, Are you suited with a pianist?"

"No, I'm not. I had twenty answers to my advertisement, and I appointed the six most promising young ladies to call last night, after six, and exhibit their skill. I should think the poor pianoached still from the way they banged it about."

"I have come to introduce a candidate for the post," Bernard looked towards poor Violet. "I have known Miss Dean ever since she came to London, and I think she might suit you."

At this juncture the elderly young lady paid for the song and departed, leaving Mrs. Nairn free to join the conclave. Her husband repeated what Bernard had said, and she looked gravely at Violet.

"It's not hard work, Miss Dean, but it wants great patience and real musical skill. It's not enough to put up with customers' whims (and some of them need the patience of Job), you must be able to read any piece of music, however difficult, at sight, and to play it as if you knew it by heart."

"I am very fond of music," said the girl, slowly, "and an old master who taught me said I ought to become a professional. Will you let me play something for you?"

"Have you brought any music?"

"I have no music with me in London," she confessed; "but I will try anything you like."

Mrs. Nairn took up a symphony of Beethoven's and placed it at the piano. Violet's touch, confused and nervous at first, gained courage as she went on, an operatic fantasia and a gay French chansonette followed, then Mrs. Nairn looked at her husband.

"I don't think you can do better than try Miss Dean," she said, decidedly; "and oh, I shall be glad to get back to the children."

David Nairn left his wife and Violet to talk together while he asked Maxwell, with a glance, to follow him into the furthest room.

"Who is she?" he demanded, laconically.

"Miss Dean."

"I know. But where did you pick her up, my good fellow. A girl who can play like that is little short of a prodigy. Do you mean she would actually come for eighteen shillings a week?"

"And be thankful. Yes. It's not a very new story. Her mother wanted her to marry a man she hated, and so she ran away from home, meaning to be a governess. She had no reference, no experience, and no one would try her. She has the front attic in the house where I lodge, and my landlady says it's piffling to see the letters she's written, and the miles she's walked in search of work. I believe, poor girl, she has spent nearly all her money, and that waitresses her in the face."

David Nairn hesitated.

"But I can't make out her difficulty, she is a musical genius. She ought to find employment easily."

"I think she began too humbly. Middle-class women wouldn't have her as a governess, because she was too pretty, I expect, though they fell back upon her lack of references. Then, you see, she doesn't look strong, and in cheap 'cutting shops,' where they expect their 'young ladies' to be on their feet fourteen hours a day, no doubt they were afraid she would break down on their hands, and so did not like to buy her labour, Nairn. Of course I don't want to persuade you against your will, but I believe you'll never regret it if you give Miss Dean a trial—and it will be an act of real charity."

Meanwhile, Mrs. Nairn was talking to the sad-faced girl.

"I think you would be comfortable here," she said, kindly; "the work is not really heavy. Have you any friends in London?"

"No, I am quite a stranger here," answered

"I think, if my husband and you settle things, I could tell you of some cheap lodgings not far from our home."

Violet tried to feel grateful, but would have preferred her attic at Mrs. Burn's. She thought Mrs. Nairn wonderfully kind and friendly, so that it was an intense relief to her when she left the shop, engaged as pianist, at a weekly salary of eighteen shillings, with the request that she would commence her duties the next day.

"I can never thank you enough!" she told Bernard, as they turned away from the big music shop together.

"Don't try," he said, kindly; "I am only glad to have been of use to you."

"Mrs. Nairn spoke of recommending me rooms nearer the shop; but I would so much rather stay where I am."

"I expect you would be better off, really, in some private family," said Bernard, "where you could have a little company after the day's work was over. You must be terribly lonely living as you do now."

"I don't mind being alone."

"I never tried it for long together," said Bernard, frankly; "ever since my old home was broken up I have shared rooms with my cousin, Leonard. He's a struggling artist, and a good fellow, though given to moods, as artists are. Now, verifiers are far more philosophical."

"You speak as if you were very fond of him."

"I am. We are more like brothers than cousins. At a little chap, Leonard was a sickly, ailing boy, and my mother brought him up. He's very good-looking, and has (what young ladies generally admire) a romantic history."

He was talking on just to try and make Miss Dean feel at home with him. He did so want her to forget how he had found her on the bridge, and the sad fate he had saved her from.

"Is he older, or younger than you?"

"Younger. His mother was a lady of title, the late Lady Lucy Dane. She gave up home, friends, and fortune to marry the man she loved."

"Lady Lucy Dane!" almost gasped the listener, who knew Dane was the family-name of Lord Waldon's family, and so she must be bearing the story of his sister.

"Yes. Your own name, with two letters transposed. She was very sweet and gentle, but the slight she suffered broke her heart at last. My uncle never held up his head after he lost her; and, as for Leonard, he always vows vengeance on the brother whose harshness, he considers, killed his mother. He has never seen his uncle. Lord Ashdale never takes the least notice of him; but the Earl is not a young man, and has led a very eventful life; until quite lately I used to believe Leonard would be his heir, and blossom from a needy artist to one of the richest commoners in England."

"And won't he now! Has he offended his uncle?"

"Oh! I did not mean that Lord Ashdale would have made him his heir; but the property is entailed, and Leonard's the next of kin. However, to our surprise, the Earl married in October a girl of eighteen."

"Really!"

"Leonard was a bit down at the time. He said it proved he must have counted on the property coming to him, or he'd not have cared. I told him the Earl had a perfect right to marry if he pleased, and suggested we should drink the health of the illustrious pair in fourpenny ale. Leonard laughed the idea to scorn."

Violet Dean was silent. She tried to speak, but a lump in her throat choked her.

"The bridal pair went to Paris for the honeymoon," went on Bernard, who believed, he was cheering her up by his careless talk. "I tell Leonard he ought to call on his youthful aunt as soon as they are established in Grosvenor-gardens."

Violet Dean thought Bernard's cousin would have to wait for many a long day before he visited Lady Ashdale in Grosvenor-gardens. He could have called on her, though with much less exertion, seeing she was living under the same roof as himself.

Surely it was passing strange that in the vast

wilderness of London houses, she should have found a refuge in the one which sheltered her husband's nearest relation.

CHAPTER XII.

MANY painful duties fall to a doctor's lot, but Dr. Ward had never had one from which he shrank more than the task of telling Margaret Lorne of her daughter's loss.

The drive from the hospital to Penge, long as it was, seemed too short for his fateful communication, and he had not even broached the subject, when, as they were driving through Dulwich, Mrs. Lorne said, suddenly,—

"I suppose my darling expects me! You told me Nurse had proved herself a faithful servant; she would not let Nora forget her mother."

"Nurse has proved a servant in a thousand," replied Dr. Ward. "Acting on your behalf, I dismissed Jane as soon as I found it would be some weeks before your return, and Nurse has been in sole charge of the cottage since, it is not her fault that your little girl is not there to welcome you. Troubled at your strange silence she had come round to consult me, and during her absence a gentleman called and took Nora away."

The mother's eyes were fixed on Dr. Ward as if she would read his very soul.

"Tell me everything," pleaded Margaret Lorne, "don't torture me with suspense. What has become of my child?"

Dr. Ward told her all he knew. The cunningly devised story of her own illness and her desire for Nora. The pretence that the gentleman who came for the little girl was her mother's brother. He explained everything, adding, that in his judgment no blame attached to Jane. It was only Nurse's greater anxiety about her little charge, her conviction that her mistress possessed no brother which had aroused her suspicions, which were strengthened by finding the stranger had actually written a letter to the lady whose ambassador he professed to be.

"I think myself, most servants would have been deceived like Jane by the gentleman's specious manner," went on the Doctor. "But I had a fancy you would not be able to bear the sight of the girl after what had happened, so my wife got her a situation at the other end of Penge, and she has not the least idea it was for any reason except the doubt of your early return."

"If only you had told me sooner," was Mrs. Lorne's bitter cry. "You say this happened in November! It is now the 10th of January. Think of the six precious weeks we have lost!"

"They are not lost," he answered gravely. "It seemed to me in your illness I might take the position of a friend and do all that a friend could for you. Nurse remembered that you had lately been to Waldon, and that a gentleman called Fox, from the same town, had called to see you at Woodbine Cottage. I went down and interviewed Mr. Fox the first moment I could leave home after Nora's abduction."

Poor Margaret blushed hotly, and would have shrunk farther back into her own corner of the brougham. Had Mr. Fox told all he knew of her past, and, if so, what must the doctor think of her?

"My dear lady," said Dr. Ward, kindly, "try and look on me as a friend. Mr. Fox had to give me the outline of your sad story, but I can only tell you it made me pity you more than I ever pitied any one before."

"And you told him about Nora?"

"I showed him the letter left at Woodbine Cottage by the man who took her away. Mr. Fox refused to tell me the name of the writer, though he recognised the hand at once as that of one of his clients. He said—forgive me—there could be no doubt that Nora was in her father's keeping and that he would only give her back to you when his wife returned to him."

"She is not his wife," said Mrs. Lorne, solemnly; "he can have no other wife while I live."

She spoke very quietly, but with an earnestness which made Dr. Ward perceive she really believed what she said. Either trouble had affected

the poor woman's mind, or she would not let herself realise her mistake.

"He ought to have no other wife," agreed Dr. Ward, "but, Mrs. Lorne, right is not all-powerful in this world. I grieve to hurt your feelings, but I am bound to tell you the truth. I do not know the name of—of Nora's father. I have no idea of his address, but Mr. Fox knows both, and he assured me on his word of honour that his client was a man of brutal obstinacy and that he would abide by the strict letter of his threat—unless his wife were restored to him he would never let you have your child."

"But can he keep her from me?" asked poor stricken Mrs. Lorne. "Would not the law which deprives her of his name give me an absolute claim to her?"

"I thought of that," said Dr. Ward, speaking with a little constraint. "But would you like the secret of your past noised abroad, as it must be, if you institute proceedings for the recovery of your daughter? And if her father is rich and powerful, would he not be able to evade the course of justice? You and I may be morally certain it was he who took Nora away, but we have no absolute proof."

The poor mother turned to him with sorrowful eyes.

"Do you mean that I must bear it? That not content with having robbed me of all that women most prize, he must take my child too, and I sit down humbly and make no attempt to recover her?"

"I meant something very different. Since no power on earth can now make you this man's wife, can you not bring yourself to help to restore the woman who legally has that title to her husband?"

Margaret Lorne opened her beautiful eyes wide in her indignation.

"Surely he does not think that I am hiding her from him?"

"He thinks—as I gather from Mr. Fox—that you went to her with the story of your marriage, that you represented yourself as his wife, and so made the girl imagine she had been deceived, and that he had plotted the ruin of her young life."

Mrs. Lorne shook her head.

"She was quite a young girl, little more than a child. I had meant to curse her, but when I saw her sitting there in her bridal robes, I could not do it. I told her my story, but I never tried to make her think her marriage was no marriage. I told her the law of England would call her Leonard's wife, but in Heaven's sight he belonged to me."

"And then—"

"She was very gentle with me. She did not shrink from me in horror as some women would have done. She told me she would never take my place, that nothing in the world could ever make her trust him again, and that she should leave him for ever."

"She has left him; she disappeared on her wedding day while the bridegroom and the guests were at the lunch given in honour of the ceremony. An excuse was made for her absence on the plea that she was resting, when they went to tell her it was time to dress for her journey she had disappeared."

"Then she kept her word; she promised me never to take my place."

"But, my dear lady," said Dr. Ward, a little troubled at Mrs. Lorne's indifference to her rival's fate, "don't you see that the poor girl's position is a terrible one? She has left her husband and is hiding from all her friends. So long as she lives she can never have a real home of her own; never live fearlessly under her own name until she returns to him. He wronged you I grant, cruelly, but so far as I can ascertain his bride has no cause to reproach him. Can't you see that in parting them you have done a cruel thing? You have not benefited yourself one jot, and you have ruined the happiness of two lives."

But Mrs. Lorne could not, would not, see it. The life of isolation she had led for the last few years seemed to have dulled her perception, unless her own interests were concerned. It had never struck Dr. Ward before that in spite of

her beauty and her sorrow she was a selfish, narrow-minded woman.

He drove her to the cottage and left her in the care of nurse, but he went home with a troubled mind. It seemed to him that there was one person in the sad drama of sin and sorrow more to be pitied even than Mrs. Lorne, the girl-bride who, on her wedding-day, had had so cruel a revelation forced upon her.

Mary Grey was a very superior young woman, and in the first days after Mrs. Lorne's return to Woodbine Cottage she treated the nurse more as a friend than a servant. She and Mary went over and over every detail of the evening when Nora was taken away, but of course they could find no clue. The child had certainly been taken at once away from Penge—but where?

"He might have sent her to school, you see, ma'am," said Mary, thoughtfully. "She was tall for her age; besides, many children do go to school before they are seven. I think, maybe, if you could afford it, you might put an advertisement in the paper offering a reward for information about a little girl who was decoyed from her home on the 29th of November."

Mrs. Lorne caught at the idea, and a notice appeared day after day in the *Telegraph* and *Standard* offering twenty pounds reward for the recovery of the missing child. A full description of the little girl was given, including a list of the clothes she was wearing at the time she left home.

The vicar of Eastnor saw the advertisement, and showed it to his wife. He had found it better to tell Mrs. Tempest the full history of their little charge, and to do the lady justice, she was most kind and motherly to poor Nora. "It is just what Mr. Lorne warned me of," said the vicar. "He feared that the moment the mother recovered her senses she would try to obtain possession of the child."

Mrs. Tempest hesitated.

"I suppose Mrs. Lorne is mad," she said, gravely; "but when you come to think of it, we have only her brother-in-law's word for it."

The vicar felt irritable.

"You could not want more. He spoke most kindly and charitably of Mrs. Lorne, though he hinted that his brother's marriage had been a very great mistake."

Mrs. Tempest was not convinced.

"When Mrs. Lorne was here I thought her one of the nicest women I ever knew, not in the least the sort of person to go out of her mind. She never seemed to care to make acquaintances. She was just wrapped up in her husband and children, but the few times I saw her I liked her extremely."

"Well, my dear, according to your own showing, she was devoted to her husband, and no doubt his loss upset her reason."

"Nora is always talking of her mother," said Mrs. Tempest, "and she declares her father died soon after her baby brother."

Mr. Tempest dismissed the subject. For his part he was quite satisfied with the arrangement, which added a hundred a year to his income, and did not wish to do anything to imperil its continuance; but his wife had the true mother's heart, and when she gathered her own children round her she could not help thinking of Mrs. Lorne, whose one eye-lamb had been taken from her. She felt positive that the advertisement which appeared so constantly must be Mrs. Lorne's, though the address was an agency, and only the initials "M. L." were given. At last she was so much touched by the constant appeal, that unknown to her husband she wrote a few lines to "M. L." and posted it herself in a distant market town the next time she went for a day's shopping. It was a very simple letter, but it came straight from her heart. She said the description applied exactly to a child then in her own care, who was brought to her house the day after the date given in the advertisement. The gentleman who came with the little girl described himself as her uncle. He declared her father was dead, and her mother in an asylum. Mrs. Tempest went on to say she dared not give up the child without her husband's consent, and therefore she could not put her name or address on the letter; but if

"M. L." felt Nora was the little girl she had lost, would she advertise in the *Telegraph* a London address at which she could be seen; meanwhile, it might comfort her to know the child was perfectly well, and, except that she often asked for her mother, quite happy.

Mrs. Tempest felt a little frightened at her own rashness when the letter was in the post, and almost wished she could have recalled it. After all Mrs. Lorne might be mad, and then it certainly was no kindness to Nora to give her up to her, and as the vicar said, a hundred a year was a great comfort. The poor lady had quite a guilty sensation when she looked at the newspaper the first day or two after her letter had started, and every knock at the front door sent her heart into her mouth, though of course it was quite impossible that Mrs. Lorne could have discovered the name and address of her anonymous correspondent, and come in person to demand her child.

But on the third morning the advertisement, headed, "Twenty pounds reward," was missing, and in its stead was a much shorter one.

"Woodbine Cottage, Penge, any day, any hour."

Mrs. Tempest felt rather as if she had applied a spark to a box of gunpowder. What in the world would her husband say? If she went to London without consulting him would he ever forgive her, and yet could she leave that other mother in suspense?

The next day she announced her intention of going to London to see her mother, a widow, from whom she had some expectations. Mr. Tempest said at once she had better stay all night. She left the children in the best of health, Nora begging her to "bring her back her own mamma," and if she felt like a conspirator no one would have suspected it from her manner.

Old Mrs. Bevan was delighted to see her daughter. She had passed her sixtieth birthday, but she had a wonderfully clear head, and poor Mrs. Tempest felt it an unutterable relief to pour out her story.

"You see, mother, Henry is so poor, and the children want so many things; a hundred a year seemed like a godsend."

Mrs. Bevan stroked her daughter's hand affectionately. "I understand. Henry wouldn't hurt a fly wilfully; but if anyone had to benefit by poor Mrs. Lorne's insanity he thought it might just as well be himself."

"Yes. You remember the Lornes, don't you, mother? They lived at Eastnor quite a long time, and they left quite suddenly after the boy died; indeed, Mr. Lorne was abroad at the time, and never even came to the funeral."

Mrs. Bevan nodded her head.

"And there were a few persons who said his name was not Lorne at all, and that Mrs. Lorne was not respectable!"

"Yes," poor Mrs. Tempest flushed. "Mother, do tell me what to do. If I go down to Woodbine Cottage, and Mrs. Lorne seems quite sane, I know I should agree to give up the child, and it might make Henry very angry."

Mrs. Bevan smiled; she was a very clever old lady, and knew how to manage people a good deal better than did her daughter.

"Suppose you agree to leave it all to me, and just do what I tell you, my dear. If you know nothing you can't be to blame. All you have to do is to write to Henry and say I want you to stay over Sunday."

Mrs. Tempest was delighted at the idea; she loved her husband and children dearly, but it was always a treat to have a little rest from domestic cares in her childhood's home.

"And just remember, please," said Mrs. Bevan, "you are to ask no questions; you've got to do nothing but leave things to me."

She turned the conversation away from the subject of Mrs. Lorne and Nora; she discussed the Sunday arrangements at the Vicarage, and learned that in the afternoon, while their parents were at Sunday School, the children spend their time in the nursery or the garden. The nursery was on the ground floor and had French windows opening on to the lawn. Mrs. Tempest expressed herself as quite comfortable about ser-

vante now; she had a nice girl for the children and a respectable widow in the kitchen.

"She has two boys of her own living with their grandparents, so I always let her go home on Sundays directly the dinner things are washed up; it makes a little treat for her."

Mrs. Bevan nodded approvingly.

The next day (Saturday) Mrs. Tempest was told when she came down to breakfast that her mother had gone out and would not be home till lunch time. She thought it strange, but never connected the journey with Mrs. Lorne.

Mrs. Bevan reached Penge before ten o'clock, and drove at once to Woodbine Cottage. A very few minutes conversation with Margaret enlisted her sympathies entirely on her side, and Mrs. Lorne readily gave Dr. Ward's name and address when her visitor mentioned the doubt of her sanity, which had been instilled into the minds of the people who had charge of her little girl.

"I can only help you on one condition," said Mrs. Bevan: "that you do not make my daughter or her husband responsible for giving up the little girl to you. My idea is that you should circumvent Mr. Lorne with his own weapons. He stole Nora from this house; you must steal her from the Vicarage. I shall keep my daughter till Monday, and I find that between school and church my son-in-law is generally from home most of Sunday afternoon. The children will be either in the garden or the nursery—a front room with French windows opening on to the lawn. Your little girl will know you again and go willingly with you. There is a train from Eastnor to London at three o'clock, and no other till nine at night, so that you will have a fair start. Of course, you must not bring the child here, but your friend Dr. Ward, would, no doubt, take care of her until you had managed to get the house off your hands and provide yourself with another home."

And Margaret Lorne carried out this plan to the letter. Just as Mr. Tempest was busily engrossed in the Sunday-school a lady walked up the drive to the Vicarage. Some children, warmly wrapped up in outdoor garments, were playing about in the garden. With her heart beating almost to suffocation the poor mother recognised her little girl. She waited until the other children were at some distance, and then she called, faintly, "Nora!"

At the sound of that loved voice the little girl turned, and, instead of following the other children, who had gone to find their nurse, she ran into her mother's arms. They only just caught the train; but as it steamed out of Eastnor station it carried with it one exulting rejoicing woman. Margaret Lorne had been worried many times by the man she had once called her husband, but in this one thing she had triumphed. Nora was her own again.

She altered Mrs. Bevan's plans just a little. She did not ask Dr. Ward to receive Nora even for a night; she begged him instead to see to the sale of her furniture, and when the house was empty to restore the key to the landlord, with rent up to the following Michaelmas, being for the current quarter, and six months' notice; she herself did not set foot in Penge, she took a cab at the terminus and drove with Nora to Charing Cross. Here Mary Grey awaited them in charge of several boxes. Mother-love had conquered every other feeling in Margaret Lorne's heart; she was flying from England with the child who was more precious to her than aught on earth.

Nurse had taken the tickets, and the little party were soon comfortably settled in the train. Mrs. Lorne leant back in her corner as though worn out by all she had gone through; but Nora was wide awake, and as merry as a cricket. She was delighted at finding her mother again, though she admitted she had been very happy at the Vicarage, and that everyone there was kind to her.

Mrs. Lorne did not go on to Paris, it had too many bitter-sweet memories for her; she stayed in Boulogne, and after two nights at an hotel discovered a charming maisonnette to be let furnished at a very moderate rent.

Nora was delighted with the new home, but Mary Grey did not seem so satisfied; she had

travelled a good deal in other situations before coming to Mrs. Lorne, and it struck her at once that the rent was astonishingly low.

There must be something wrong with the house, she thought eagerly; but she could not speak French, and the *bonne* left in charge by the proprietor had no knowledge of English, so that the careful Mary had no chance of asking questions.

But when they had been at the Villa St. Barbe some days little Nora's spirits began to flag, she did not care to run about and play, she complained that her throat hurt her and her head was so hot.

Almost frantic, Mrs. Lorne sent for the best English doctor in the town. He told her the truth at once. The child was sickening from scarlet fever, the family who had previously occupied the villa had lost a child from the same fell malady. The house had been fumigated and disinfected, but there could be no doubt neither operation had been thorough.

Anxious to secure another tenant, it had been offered to Mrs. Lorne at an absurdly low price—and this was the result.

"Surely you must have known the letting value of such a house was double what you were asked!" said the doctor.

The poor mother shook her head.

"I never thought."

The doctor, touched by her woestricken face, was kindness itself; but he told Mary Grey that from the first he had no hope, the child was naturally delicate, and she had taken the disease badly.

He was right. On the seventh day after the disease declared itself Margaret Lorne stood by the bedside of her dead child, and in her misery and anguish and despair took a terrible and unnatural oath. She swore that from that day forward she would have but one object in life: to be revenged on the Earl of Waldon. He had sullied her good name and blighted her happiness. Not content with that, he had destroyed her child. To the poor mother's excited mind he was as much Nora's murderer as though he had stabbed her to the heart.

"But I will be revenged on him," said the miserable woman; "as there is a Heaven above us he shall suffer for his crimes."

The oath was kept; there came a terrible day of reckoning for Lord Waldon.

(To be continued.)

A HAPPY STRATAGEM.

—30—

(Continued from page 129.)

"Agreed."

"And of course you will dine with us. Why?"—smiling—"poor Uncle Will has gone to the hotel on purpose to invite you! We live very plainly, but as I have an intimate acquaintance with the *menu* of the *table d'hôte*, I think I can venture to assert we aren't much worse."

It was a very pretty cottage. Mr. Carlyle had taken it furnished, so most of the surroundings were essentially German; but Bee had given it an English air by the addition of sundry pretty trifles and several glass vases filled with bright summer flowers. A neat English servant opened the door, and her face struck Rex as being strangely familiar. It flashed upon him at last he had seen her at Lady Carteret's.

"Uncle Will can't speak a word of German, so we brought Emma with us for his special benefit," said Miss St. John. "Isn't this a funny house?"

"I like it."

"So do I. Here's my uncle"—then, as Mr. Carlyle came to meet them—"should you ever have thought, uncle, that Mr. Ashwin's friend should have been my friend-in-need in the shower this morning?"

Rex came to the conclusion Mr. Carlyle was a charming old gentleman, and that Miss St. John quite deserved his old friend's praise. He per-

sisted in thinking of Bee as a fellow-artist, utterly forgetting that she belonged to the species he had elected to hate. There was nothing unfeminine or strong-minded about Miss St. John, and yet Rex contrived to blind himself wilfully to the fact that she was a young lady.

When Emma was brushing out her mistress's hair that night she ventured on an observation.

"I never was so astonished as when I saw that gentleman, Miss St. John. Until I heard you introduce him to the master I could have sworn it was Captain Fairfax as Lady Helen was going to marry."

Bee started.

"Is there such a resemblance, Emma?"

"Yes, miss; and it's not in looks only, it's in everything; his voice is just the same. The Captain was the nicest gentleman I ever met—a deal too good for Lady Helen. They do say she's married a plain miser now, Miss St. John, just because he's rich."

Bee was a long time that night before she could sleep. She knew that Sir Reginald Fairfax had taken to artistic studies to console him for his false love, and she knew also that it is a common thing for artists to travel under assumed names. Before she slept that night she had solved all that puzzled her.

"Oh! you dear old match-maker!" she exclaimed, thinking of Mr. Ashwin, "did you possibly imagine by trying to throw us together under different names we could fall into your plans? Well, I need not be afraid of meeting 'Mr. Bertram' now, as his whole heart is Lady Helen's, and I never had a heart at all. I think we can be as intimate as we like without any fear of consequences."

And they were intimate. Uncle Will, who had spent most of his life in the Colonies, possessed very hazy ideas of a chaperon's duties; besides, his Beatrice hated young men, and shared his own disapproval of marriage, therefore what harm could come of letting her see a good deal of this handsome young artist?

So Bee finished her picture in the sweet September sunshine, but a strange fate seemed against Reginald's; he could not get on with it at all, and by-and-by he confided to Miss St. John he was sure landscapes were not in his line—would she not sit to him herself; with such a model he must succeed.

"I should not like to have my portrait exhibited."

"Then sit in character. Let me paint you as Marguerite or Elaine. Your face is just what one fancies the *Hylmaida's* to have been before her sorrows came."

"Before she believed in love. I think that is the beginning of all sorrow, Mr. Bertram."

"Don't you believe in it?"

"No."

"Really no?"

"I believe there is such a thing, and some unhappy people are destined to experience it, but I think the greater number are spared such a misfortune, and I am glad to be one of them."

"I don't agree with you. Miss St. John, I can't bear to hear you talk like that."

"Why not?"

"No good woman scoffs at love."

"Perhaps I am not a good woman."

"I am sure you are. Since I have known you my faith in womanhood has been restored. I used to think, because one had played me false, there was no such thing as truth or purity in the sex, but you have taught me better."

"Perhaps I shall convert you to my own faith yet."

"And that is!"

"That love is an unnecessary evil."

Mr. Carlyle gave his consent, and the sittings began. The pathetic style of Bee's face was just what Rex needed for the *Hylmaida*. The picture grew apace.

"Do you know," said Miss St. John, suddenly, one day, "fifteen months ago this picture would have been my exact likeness!"

"You were ill then."

"I was alone and in sorrow. My mother was

dead, and I was working with my needle for daily bread."

"Miss St. John!"

"It is quite true. I've often wished to tell you. I wanted to see if you looked shocked. I lived in two miserable rooms in a cheap part of London, and I used to work from morning till night. At last one bright June day Uncle Will found me out, and I have been happy ever since. I shall always say the month of June brought me happiness!"

"And I used to think it the saddest in my life. Miss St. John, may I tell you why?"

"I think I know."

"Impossible!"

"Nay. You are Sir Reginald Fairfax. I have known it from the first evening you came here. Knowing that, it is natural I should hear the rest, and I shall hear of some beautiful Lady Fairfax, and then I shall know you are consoled."

One morning Rex came to the cottage and found no beautiful model awaiting him. Emma said her mistress had gone for a ride.

"She expected you at eleven, sir, and told me she should be back long before that. She started at eight, and I expected her to breakfast at nine."

Rex felt uneasy, and started off at once in search of her, having learned the way she proposed to go, which was by a dangerous pass.

With passionate haste, with intense eagerness, he pursued his way. The dangerous spot was about two miles from the cottage, but Rex waited for no conveyance; he believed anxiety would give wings to his speed, and so he hurried on.

Just as he had feared, just what he had pictured to himself. There, at the brow of the hill, at the steepest point of descent, lay something very still.

His heart ached with a yearning longing. The face was white and motionless, the blue eyes were firmly closed. Were they to open again only on the resurrection morn?

"Beatrice!"

He bent over her, and took one of the still hands in his. Tearing off her gauntlet, he chafed the ice-cold fingers in his own.

"Beatrice!"

Still no answer, no response. He had brought a flask of brandy with him, and now he tried to insert some drops between her closely-clenched teeth.

"Speak to me, my darling! Oh! Beatrice, look up and speak to me, even if it is for the last time."

The brandy must have been effectual. She stirred faintly, and at this passionate appeal she half opened her blue eyes. There was a strange expression in their depths. She recognised him, and yet her mind seemed far away. She had not quite come to herself; her spirit yet hovered on the borders of its prison-house.

"Beatrice!"

"I thought you would come."

"Are you hurt! Oh! Beatrice, how could you be so rash—you who are so precious?"

She was still wandering, though her words were audible, but spoken in a strange, dreary voice.

"I thought that it was death. Should you have been sorry, Reginald!"

He knew she was not herself, and yet the words filled him with a strange, passionate joy.

"Life would have had nothing left for me worth the living for."

"But you are here," said Bee, simply; "you belong to Lady Helen."

"I belong to no one in the world but you. Oh! Bee, my darling, I cannot let you die! Come back to me, and let me teach you to believe in love."

"I believe in it now," she whispered, faintly. "But I am so tired. Kiss me, Rex."

And even as he pressed his lips passionately to hers the fear smote him that this caress, which she herself had asked for, might be his first and last.

Her head fell back upon his breast. He gathered her in his arms, and began his perilous descent, for with such a burden it was perilous

indeed. He never quite remembered the details of that long walk; he only recollects Mr. Carlyle taking Beatrice from his arms, and calling on Heaven to bless him.

Three, four days had passed since the accident, and from the moment when he placed her in her adopted father's arms Rex had never seen his Beatrice. He had heard of her constantly; knew that beyond a terrible shock to her whole system and a sprained ankle she was none the worse for her awful peril. The doctor enjoined perfect rest and freedom from excitement. So often as he called to inquire, Rex had never yet been invited to the invalid's presence.

But on this fourth evening he determined to take French leave, and invite himself. He could see Mr. Carlyle in the distance, watering his flowers, and he guessed that Bee had been carried into the drawing-room, and laid upon the sofa. So, calmly opening the glass doors, he walked straight into the hall, and then into his darling's room.

Bee blushed crimson; then she recollected herself, gave the artist her hand, and made some confused little speech of thanks and gratitude. Rex was not in the least taken in by it. He began to hope that his love was not all in vain, since his darling had lost her old ease and perfect freedom from restraint.

"Bee, why wouldn't you see me before?"

Bee was hard of hearing.

"I came three times each day, only to be denied. Don't you think it was a little hard?"

"Why were you in such a hurry?" asked Miss St. John, demurely. "Did you want to say good-bye?"

"Good-bye!"

"I thought you might be returning to England. You have been here a long time, you know."

"I shall never return to England until I have got something that I want."

She did not ask him what it was. She just closed her eyes, as though the light was too strong for them.

"Bee, don't you know what I want! Darling, won't you give yourself to me?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"You belong to Lady Helen."

"I shall never belong to anyone but you. Oh, my darling! because for a little while before I ever saw you I loved another woman will you condemn me to a lonely life?"

"And I don't believe in love."

"I am quite willing to undertake your conversion; it is such an easy creed, Bee!"

"Go away!"

"Do you mean it! Oh, child, if you send me, remember it is for always, and I shall never be happy again! Bee, can't you care for me! Is my poverty so great a drawback?"

"I do care," she whispered, faintly, "and I should care just the same if you hadn't a penny; but I can't marry you."

"Why not?"

"Because I can't."

"Bee, we shall never understand each other like this. Tell me what is the barrier between us!"

No answer.

"Have you promised Mr. Carlyle to stay with him always! Is that it, Bee!"

"I think I promised it; but Uncle Will is prepared for me to break it. He has quite settled in his own mind we ought to be married, because you saved my life."

"I always thought Uncle Will a genius; I am quite sure of it now. Bee, there can't be any good reason for you to send me away?"

"There is."

"Then tell it me."

"You'll hate me."

"I'll take my chance of that."

"Dreadful consequences ensue if you marry me, Rex, I am Mary Fairfax!"

How he persuaded her that Mary Fairfax or Beatrice St. John alike, she was dearest to him on earth—how the two confided the truth to Mr. Carlyle, and overcame his objections to Rex for

his relationship to his sister's husband by the fact that Bee shared that misfortune—we need not dwell on here.

Uncle Will was induced at last to smile on the engagement, and to declare it was all his own doing, and that he had planned it from first to last.

The two young people are mildly incredulous on this latter statement, but both are too fond of the dear old gentleman to hurt his feelings by contradicting him.

So Rex was master of Fairfax Castle and its revenues after all, for within eighteen months of his uncle's death he was united to his second love, and married the only woman who could restore to him his birthright.

But Sir Reginald and Lady Fairfax can laugh at any suggestion that theirs is a marriage of convenience. Their perfect mutual love and confidence, the quiet domestic happiness that reigns at the old Castle, these tell anyone more plainly than mere words that Rex and Beatrice married for love's dear sake.

Uncle Will lives with them, and vies with another old friend in spoiling the small people who run about the stately old house, and make its walls ring again with merriment.

This other friend, of course, is Mr. Ashwin, the prince of matchmakers, who is never tired of congratulating himself on the happy stratagem which brought the two cousins together, always ending up with a sigh of intense satisfaction and the words,—

"I saw it all, Mr. Carlyle. From the first time I set eyes upon your niece, I knew she was Reginald's Fate."

[THE END.]

THE RIVAL SISTERS.

—101—

CHAPTER I.

AS PHILIP DESMOND drove down the street behind his handsome pair of prancing bays, holding the ribbons skilfully over them, all the maidens promenading up the street or sitting in groups on the balconies turned to look at him.

He was certainly a handsome fellow, there was no denying that. He was tall, broad-shouldered, with a fair, handsome face, laughing blue eyes, a crisp, brown, curling moustache, and what was better still, he was heir to a million of money.

He was spending some time at the fashionable garrison town, Barminster.

Every mother of a marriageable daughter who had heard of the millionaire managed to rake and scrape together enough money to pay a visit to Barminster.

It was laughable to see how adroitly these mothers managed to secure an introduction upon one pretext or another, to the handsome millionaire. Then the daughters were duly brought forward and presented.

Every one knew the story of Philip Desmond. His lady-mother and elder sister lived in what was called the Castle, the grandest and most famous estate by far in the county.

With all the money at her command, haughty Mrs. Desmond had but one great sorrow, and that was that her handsome son could not be induced to remain at home and lead the life of a fashionable young gentleman of leisure.

At college he had declared his intention of studying medicine. He had graduated with high honours, and, much to his mother's annoyance, had established himself as a full-fledged M.D.

If he had been poor perhaps patients might not have come to him so readily; but as it was, he found himself launched at once into a lucrative practice.

This particular summer upon which our story opens, his grand lady-mother was unusually incensed against handsome Philip. He had refused to spend his vacation at the Castle, because, as he explained, there was a bevy of fashionable girls invited there for him to fall in love with, and whom he was expected to entertain.

"The long and the short of it is, mother, I shall not do it," he decisively declared. "I shall simply run over to Barmminster, and take up my quarters in some unpretentious boarding-house, where I can come down to my meals and lounge about in a night shirt, and read my papers and smoke my cigars swinging in a hammock, without being disturbed by girls."

In high dudgeon his lady-mother and sister had gone off on the Continent, and they lived all their after-lives to rue it, and to bemoan the fact that they had not stayed at home to watch over the young man, and to guard the golden prize from the band of women who were on the lookout for just such an opportunity.

Philip Desmond found just such an ideal boarding-house as he was looking for. Every woman who came to the town with a marriageable daughter tried to secure board at that boarding-house, but signally failed.

They never dreamed that the handsome, debonaire young millionaire paid the good landlady an exorbitant price to keep women out.

Good Mrs. Smith did her duty faithfully.

She knew, however, why she was invited everywhere, and why she was so popular in the town. When the ladies, accompanied by their daughters called upon her, she knew why they lingered. They were in hopes of being invited to stay to tea. But she never asked them to remain, and they went as they came, without securing an introduction to handsome Mr. Desmond.

When Mrs. Pomeroy, of London, heard of the great attraction at Barmminster, she decided that that was the place where she and her two daughters Claire and Beatrix, should spend the summer. Dressed in their natty cycling costumes, and mounted on their tandem, the girls would be sure to create a sensation.

"If either of you girls comes home engaged to this millionaire," Mrs. Pomeroy had declared, "I shall consider it the greatest achievement of my life. True, we live in a fine house in Mayfair, and we are supposed to be very wealthy; but not one of our dear friends has discovered that the house we live in is merely rented, nor that your father's business is mortgaged to the full extent. We shall have a hard time to pull through, and keep up appearances, until you two are married off."

The two girls were pretty; no one could help admitting that. They were called "The Heavenly Twins." Claire was dark, like her mother, while Trixy was fair, with the most golden of golden hair and lovely blue eyes. This younger daughter of Mrs. Pomeroy was bewitchingly pretty; but some people were unkind enough to say that she bleached her hair to that beautiful golden shade—they were sure of it, because her eyebrows and eyelashes were quite dark. And, worst of all, she was a bicycle girl!

Mrs. Pomeroy established herself at the best hotel with her two daughters. Every Saturday afternoon the pompous old broker went over to Barmminster, to make a show for the girls.

"The next question is," said Mrs. Pomeroy, after the trunks were unpacked, and the pretty clothes hung up in the various closets, "which one of you two will Mr. Desmond prefer?"

"Me!" said jolly Trixy, with a mischievous laugh, complacently gazing at the lovely face reflected in the mirror.

"It might be as well to wait until after he is introduced to us before you answer that question," said Claire. "But how are we to meet him? He does not cycle."

"Your father will attend to that part of the business," said Mrs. Pomeroy. "He understands what he has to do, and will find a way to accomplish it. Having marriageable daughters always sharpens a man's wits. Your father will find some way to get in with young Mr. Desmond, depend upon that."

"I am afraid papa is getting tired of introducing us to so many marriageable men, when nothing ever comes of it."

"It wouldn't do him the least particle of good to get tired," returned Mrs. Pomeroy. "He would have to get tired, and then begin over again."

It required three weeks for Mr. Pomeroy to secure an introduction to the young man. On the following day the two sisters, dressed in their best, and hanging on their father's arms, paraded up and down the streets until they espied the object of their search. Introductions naturally followed; but, much to the chagrin of the girls, their father, after chatting for a moment with handsome Mr. Desmond, dragged them along.

"I did not have a chance to say one word to him," said Claire, disappointedly.

"Nor I," said Trixy, poutingly.

"Don't make a dead set for a man the first time you see him," recommended Mr. Pomeroy, grimly. "Take matters easy."

It was all that he could do to keep Mrs. Pomeroy and the girls from rushing matters and spoiling everything. The proudest moment of their lives was when Philip Desmond called upon them at their hotel one afternoon. The girls were squabbling up in their room when his card was handed them.

"Did he say which one of us he wished to see?" cried Claire, breathlessly.

"The Misses Pomeroy," replied the boy.

There was a rush for their best clothes, and an exciting time for the mother in getting the girls into them, during which the bitter quarrel was renewed and waged furiously between the two sisters.

"Trixy should not be allowed to go down and see him," cried Claire, bitterly. "I am the elder. I should have the first chance."

"But he didn't call on you," returned the mother.

"Depend upon it, I shall see him," returned Trixy, "and win him if I can!"

A moment later, two girls, both pretty as pictures, with their arms lovingly twined about each other, glided into the parlour. Handsome Philip turned from the window, thinking to himself that he had never beheld a fairer picture.

There was half an hour's chat, and then he took his departure. He never knew why he did it, but he invited them both to drive with him the next day. Trixy was about to answer "yes," delightedly, on the spot; but her sister, remembering her father's warning, was more diplomatic.

"We shall have to ask mamma if we can go," she said.

Mrs. Pomeroy, who was passing through the corridor at that moment, was called in. She and her elder daughter exchanged glances.

"I am sorry," she said, apologetically, "but Trixy and I have an engagement for that afternoon."

The young millionaire fell into the trap at once.

"Then could not Miss Claire accompany me?" he inquired.

"If she cares to go I really have no objection," said Mrs. Pomeroy, hiding her delight with an arch smile.

When he left, and the two girls had returned to their room, the stormiest kind of a scene followed.

"I did not have a fair show," cried Trixy, as soon as the door was closed, her eyes blazing, her cheeks flushed scarlet, her little white hands clinched. "I will win handsome Philip Desmond, in spite of you! If I don't, Claire shall never have him!"

"Take care! take care!" cautioned Mrs. Pomeroy. "Your sister Claire is twenty; you are but eighteen. You should not stand in her way."

"I tell you he likes me best," cried her younger daughter, "and I—I like him! I fell in love with him at first sight."

"I can say the same thing," replied Claire, flushing hotly.

"Dear me, it is a terrible thing to hear two sisters quarrel over a man!" sighed Mrs. Pomeroy, in tears. "I do wish I had left you at home, Trixy."

"We will see who wins handsome Philip Desmond," repeated Trixy. "I say, if I do not win him, Claire never shall, so there!"

CHAPTER II.

MRS. POMEROY and her daughter Claire looked in astonishment at the angry little beauty before them.

Beatrix quitted the room, slamming the door after her.

"I never knew that she had such a temper," said Mrs. Pomeroy, with a look of anxiety on her face.

"I have been telling you about it for a long time," replied Claire, adding significantly: "If you do not curb it in some way, mamma, I do not know what will happen, how she will end. She is like a runaway colt—dashes ahead with anything she wishes to do, heedless of the consequences. If you would take my advice, you would send her home again, or to some other place, for a month."

"I will think about it," returned her mother, thoughtfully. "I shall see, however, that you have the first chance, because you are the elder."

"That is only proper," said Claire, complacently. "When a man has a choice of two or three, he is not likely to fall in love at once."

The next afternoon Trixy watched behind closed blinds as her sister drove off, proud and happy as a queen, in Philip Desmond's handsome carriage. Claire kissed her finger-tips gracefully to the blinds, behind which she knew her rebellious sister was watching.

The drive through the country roads was delightful, it was such a fine day, so bright, so sunny. Philip Desmond seemed to feel the influence of it, and almost unconsciously cast aside the mantle of haughtiness and pride, in which he usually wrapped himself, in order to make it pleasant for the beautiful, graceful girl whom fortune and fate had flung in his way.

Claire realised what a golden chance she was having, and made the best of it.

That was the beginning of the strangest romance that ever was written.

When Philip helped his fair companion from the carriage, Claire looked shyly into her companion's face, murmuring that she had had the most delightful drive of her life.

"I am glad you are so well pleased," answered Philip, raising his straw hat with a low bow; adding, gallantly: "I must take your sister out and show her what beautiful roads we have here."

Claire was thoroughly diplomatic. A hot flush rose to her face, but she crushed back the words that sprang to her lips, saying sweetly,—

"You are indeed thoughtful, Mr. Desmond. I am sure Trixy will appreciate it."

"We shall arrange it for to-morrow," he said.

"I would be delighted to have you accompany us. I will drop in at the hop this evening, and you can let me know."

Claire and her mother had a long talk that afternoon.

"I think she may as well go with you," said the mother. "I am positive that he will prefer you to your sister. Fair men usually like their opposites in complexion. It isn't wise to put any opposition in his way. If he says he will take you out, you ought to be glad to go, even if you are accompanied by a third person."

"But two is company, three is none," pouted Claire.

She believed her sister would be overjoyed when she heard of the invitation for the morrow. But when she told her that night, Trixy only shrugged her shapely shoulders, and to Claire's surprise, she answered, with a toss of her golden head,—

"I'll go if you want me to, and if you don't, I'll stay at home; so there!"

This remark threw Claire completely off her guard. She thought to herself, "Trixy has the good sense not to interfere between me and handsome Philip Desmond."

But, in truth, Trixy had overheard every word of the conversation about sending her home, and she knew that the only way to be allowed to remain was to quickly change her tactics, and to pretend to give Philip Desmond to her sister Claire. But deep down in her rebellious lit-

heart Trixy's resolve to win him, by fair means or foul, grew stronger and deeper.

The following afternoon the two sisters went driving with handsome Philip in his splendid T-cart, and were the envy of every girl in the town.

He did his best to entertain them. He drove them over to Thorpe, where his home was, and through the spacious grounds that surrounded the Castle.

The eyes of both sisters glowed as they caught sight of the magnificent, palatial house, and each resolved, in the depths of her heart, that this should be her home, and that she should reign mistress there.

Philip divided his attentions so equally between the two sisters that neither could feel the least bit slighted.

He had made up his mind to eschew the society of girls during his vacation; but those two pretty sisters made themselves so charming and irresistible, that, man-like, he forgot his determination, and found himself enjoying their society immensely. Strange to say, he did not seem to prefer the society of either one, and he laughed good-naturedly to himself as he thought of the lines,—

"How happy could I be with either
Were I other fair charmer away!"

The fortnight that followed flew on by golden wings.

There was not a day that Philip Desmond did not take the two sisters on some sight-seeing expedition.

Everyone began to wonder which of the two sisters was the favourite.

Mrs. Pomeroy watched affairs with the keenest interest.

"If he has a preference for either, it is certainly Claire," she told herself. "Trixy seems content that it should be so."

All night long, after these afternoon excursions, both girls would seek their pillows, and dream the whole night through of handsome Philip Desmond.

Claire would talk of him all the following morning, but Trixy uttered no word; her secret was buried down in the depths of her heart.

Other young men sought a pleasant word or a smile from gay, capricious Trixy Pomeroy. But she would have none of them.

"I will have a millionaire or nothing," she said, with a little laugh.

On two or three occasions, much to Trixy's chagrin, Mr. Desmond invited Claire to drive without her.

"That shows which way the wind is beginning to blow," she thought; and she looked at her sister critically.

Yes, Claire was certainly a handsome girl, to say the least. She was always dressed in cool white dresses, with soft, fluttering pink ribbons that set off so well the olive complexion, dark, wavy hair, great velvety-brown eyes and pink-tinted cheeks—ellipses.

Philip Desmond certainly admired her, just as he had admired scores, nay, hundreds of pretty girls before; but his heart was not touched by the fever men call love. He thought only of giving her a pleasant time. She was a jolly companion, and there his thoughts ended. He did not see that day by day the girl was falling more deeply in love with him.

His calls would have ceased at once if he had imagined that. He ought to have read her growing infatuation in the blushes that stole over her face at his coming, by the sudden drooping of the eyelids, fringed by their long, dark, curling lashes and the trembling of the lily-white little hand that lay in his.

Claire and her mother often had long conferences when she came in from her rambles with him.

"Has he spoken?" Mrs. Pomeroy would ask; and she always received the same answer in a disappointed tone—"No!"

"Any other girl would have had a declaration from the young man before this time."

"If I could make the man propose, I would be his betrothed without a day's delay," Claire would reply, quite discontentedly.

Trixy would turn away quickly before they they had time to notice the expression on her face.

One day, in discussing the matter, Mr. Pomeroy observed his younger daughter gazing fixedly at her mother and Claire.

"Love affairs do not interest you, Trixy," he said, with a laugh. "My dear," he said, suddenly, "you are not at all like your mother in disposition. Could you ever love any one very much?"

"I do not know, papa," she answered. "I do not love many people. I only care for a few. In the way you mean, love would be a fire with me, not a sentiment."

How vividly the words came back to him afterward when her love proved a devastating fire!

She had turned suddenly to the window, and seemed to forget his question.

No one knew what a depth of passion there was in the heart of this girl. If anyone should have asked her what she craved most on earth, she would have replied, on the spur of the moment—"Love!"

She had vivid day-dreams in which she would ask herself: "Is there now, in this wide world, some one living who will love me? Is there some one who will come some day and take possession of my life, as it were. I wonder what he will be like, this lover of mine whom I have never seen, but who is waiting somewhere for me!"

When her eyes fell for the first time on handsome Philip Desmond as he rode by the hotel on the afternoon they had come to Barmister, thoughtlessly turning his fair, handsome face toward the verandah on which she stood, her heart gave a terrible throb, every pulse in her being seemed to say: "That is the hero of my dreams, just as I have pictured him—the lover who is to love me as I already love him."

She was alarmed at the emotion aroused in her own heart at the sight of that fair, handsome smiling face.

Her mother and Claire spoke of it eagerly. She aroused herself with an effort, but the spell that had fallen over her was not dispelled.

Day by day her love for Philip Desmond grew with an intensity that alarmed her. She dared not tell her mother or Claire, and the secret burned deeper and deeper into the girl's heart.

"Heaven help me!" she sobbed. "How will it end!"

CHAPTER III.

A MONTH had gone by since the two sisters had met the one man who was to change the whole course of their lives.

Claire Pomeroy made no secret of her interest in handsome Philip Desmond. She built no end of air castles, all dating from the time when the young man should propose to her.

She set out deliberately to win him. Trixy watched with bated breath.

There could be no love where there was such laughing, genial friendship as existed between Claire and handsome Philip. No, no! If she set about it in the right way, she could win him.

She had read in the works of some clever writer that, given the opportunity, any woman could marry the man she liked. Now it remained for her to see if that were true.

As for Philip himself, he preferred dark-eyed Claire to her dashing, golden-haired sister, Trixy.

The climax came when he asked the girls, and also their father and mother, to join a party on his tally-ho and go to the military races.

Both dressed in their prettiest, and both looked liked pictures.

The races at Barmister were always delightful affairs. Some of the finest horses in the country were brought there to participate in these affairs.

As a usual thing, Philip Desmond entered a

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number of his best horses; but on this occasion he had not done so. Claire declared that it would have made the races all the more worth seeing had some of his horses been entered.

"Don't you think so, Trixy?" she said, turning to her sister, with a gay little laugh; but Trixy had not even heard, she was thinking so deeply.

"She is anticipating the excitement," said Mrs. Pomeroy, nodding towards Trixy; and they all looked in wonder at the unnatural flush on the cheeks and the strange, dazzling brightness in her blue eyes.

They would have been startled if they could have read the thoughts that had brought them there.

There was the usual crush of vehicles, for the races at Barmister always drew out a large crowd.

Philip Desmond's box was directly opposite the judge's stand, and the group of ladies and gentlemen assembled in it was a very merry one indeed.

Every seat in the grand stand was occupied. Both Claire and Trixy were in exuberant spirits.

It was the first race which they had ever attended, and girl-like, they were dying with curiosity to see what it would be like.

"Which horse have you picked for the winner?" asked Mr. Pomeroy, leaning over and addressing Philip.

"Either General or Robin Adair. Both seem to stand an equal chance. Well, I declare!" exclaimed Desmond, in the same breath, "if there isn't Cleopatra!—It's laughable to see her entered for the race. She's very speedy, but she isn't game. I have seen her swerve when almost crowned with victory."

Trixy Pomeroy listened to the conversation with unusual interest.

In a few moments all the riders, booted and spurred, came hurrying out from their quarters in response to the sharp clang of a bell, and in a trice had mounted their horses, and were waiting the signal to start.

The interest of the great crowd was at its height. They were discussing their favourites freely.

The buzz of voices was deafening for a moment.

No one noticed Trixy, not even Claire or her mother, as she leaned over breathlessly, and said,—

"Which horse do you think is going to win, Mr. Desmond?"

"I have no hesitancy in saying Robin Adair," he declared. "He has everything in his favour."

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"I have an idea that the little brown horse with the white stockings will win."

He laughed, and a look indicative of superior judgment broke over his face.

"I feel sure that your favourite, Cleopatra, will lose, Miss Trixy," he said.

"I feel very confident that she will win," she said.

He shook his head.

"I should like to make a wager with you on that," she cried.

"A box of chocolates—anything you like," he replied, airily; "but I must warn you that it is not quite the correct thing to wager with a lady, especially when you are quite sure that she will lose."

"I'll take my chances," she replied, a strange look flashing into her excited blue eyes.

"You have not told me what the wager is to be?"

For a moment the girl caught her breath and gave a lightning-like glance about her. No one was listening, no one would hear.

"You have not told me," said Philip Desmond, gallantly, as he bent forward.

She turned and faced him, and her answer came in an almost inaudible whisper. But he heard it, though he believed he had not heard aught.

"Do I understand you to say that your hand is the wager?" he asked, surprisedly.

"Yes!" she answered.

For a moment he looked at her in the utmost astonishment. Then a laugh suffused his fair face. Surely this was the strangest wager that he had ever heard of. He was used to the jolly larks of girls; but surely this was the strangest of them all! He knew that there was little hope of Cleopatra winning the race. But he answered, with the utmost gravity:

"Very well; I accept your wager. Your hand shall be the prize, if the little mare wins."

"She is so very young—only eighteen," he said to himself, "that she never realised what she was saying. It was only a jolly, girlish prank."

If there had been in his mind the very slightest notion that Cleopatra would win, he should have refused to accept the wager. But she surely would not win; he was certain of that.

So, with an amused smile, he acquiesced in the strange compact. In the midst of the talking and laughing, the horses came cantering on to the course.

It was a beautiful sight, the thoroughbred horses with their coats shining like satin, except where the white foam had speckled them, as they tossed their proud heads with eager impatience, the gay colours of their riders all flashing in the sunlight.

A cheer goes up from the grand stand, then the starter takes his place, and the half-dozen horses, after some little trouble, fall into something like a line. There is an instant of expectancy, then the flag drops, and away the horses fly around the circular race-track.

For a moment it is one great pell-mell rush. On, on they fly, like giant greyhounds from the leash, down the stretch of track, until they are but specks in the distance; then on they come, thundering past the grand stand at a maddening pace, with Robin Adair in the lead, General, Yellow Pete, and Black Daffy going like the wind at his heels, and Cleopatra—poor Cleopatra—fully a score of yards behind.

A mad shout goes up for Robin Adair. He looks every inch the winner, with his eyes flashing, his nostrils dilated. Every man leans forward in breathless excitement. Even the ladies seem scarcely to breathe. Suddenly a horse stumbles, and the rider is thrown headlong. There is a moment's hush; but the horse is only an outsider, and the crowd cheer the rest encouragingly.

For a time these seem to run almost level, then most of the horses seem to show signs of the terrible strain. Robin Adair keeps steadily to the fore, with General closely at his heels. The rest begin to fall off.

Again a mad shout goes up for Robin Adair.

"No, no—General!" comes the hoarse cry from a hundred throats.

But through it all the wiser ones notice the gallant little mare, Cleopatra, coming slowly to the front.

Some daring voices shout:

"Cleopatra! Cleopatra!"

"She is fresh as a daisy!" mutters some one in the box adjoining Philip Desmond's.

White to the lips, Trixy Pomeroy sits and watches, her hands clasped tightly in her lap.

The babel of voices is so deafening that she cannot hear.

Again the gallant steeds are specks in the distance. Now they pass the curve, and are on the home-stretch, dashing swiftly to the finish.

Nearer and nearer sounds the thunder of their on-coming hoofs. Ten thousand people grow mad with excitement as they dash on.

To the great surprise of the spectators, Cleopatra is gaining steadily inch by inch, until she passes those before her, even the General, and there is but a ribbon of daylight between herself and the great Robin Adair.

The crowd goes wild with intense excitement. Nerves are thrilling as down the stretch dash the racers, almost with the rapidity of lightning.

The grand stand seems to rock with the excited shouts. One great cry rises from ten thousand throats. Cleopatra has reached the great Robin Adair's flanks, and inch by inch she is gaining on him. And the excited spectators fairly hold their breath to see which horse wins.

(To be continued.)

The Boesmans in south Central Africa are exceedingly ugly, and exist almost in a state of animallism. They dwell in holes, live on roots and reptiles, and have very much the appearance of the ape.

In the estimation of coin collectors the most valuable of all the American coins to-day is the perfect silver dollar of 1804. That particular coin is worth whatever an enthusiastic collector is willing to pay for it. The highest auction price is £200, and there is a record of £240 having been paid for one at a private sale. Only thirteen of them are known to exist, and each has a record of ownership.

The laziest and dirtiest people in the world have recently been discovered in the Caucasus. They live in an inaccessible mountain range between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea, and as they were two thousand five hundred years ago, so they are to-day. Seen from without, there is a certain picturesque quality about a Syvastian village, although it merely consists of miserable stone hovels without any attempt at form or adornment. Within, the houses are inconceivably filthy. They are filled with rats, vermin, and dirt of every description. They possess no fireplace or chimney. All the cooking, in fact, is done over a hole scooped out in the middle of the floor. In these houses, men and women and children are huddled together; during the long winter months they are shut in for days at a time, the cattle often sharing their quarters. Every aperture has to be closed on account of the cold. This long imprisonment is, perhaps, the cause of the degradation of the people. Horrible diseases result from it, which are aggravated by an abnormal consumption of arrack, the strong distilled drink of the Asiatics. Besides this, it is an invariable rule to make four days a week holidays, with saints' days as extras. Since they have adopted the holidays of every other country with which they have been in contact, it is not surprising that the men find little time for work. Farming, bee-culture, and cattle-breeding are the only industries of these people, while throughout their territory there is not a single manufactured article.

"THE HUMAN HAIR: Its Restoration and Preservation." A Practical Treatise on Baldness, Greyness, Superficial Hair, &c. 40 pages. Post-free six stamps from Dr. HORN, Hair Specialist, Bournemouth.

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The choicest roasted nibs (broken-up beans) of the natural Cocoa on being subjected to powerful hydraulic pressure, give forth their excess of oil, leaving for use a finely-flavoured powder—"Cocoaine," a product which, when prepared with boiling water, has the consistence of tea, of which it is now, with many, beneficially taking the place. Its active principle being a gentle nerve stimulant, supplies the needed energy without unduly exciting the system. Sold only in labelled tins. If unable to obtain it of your tradesman, a tin will be sent post free for 9 stamps.

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The application of this to the face removes wrinkles and the crow's feet marks, giving a youthful appearance. 2s. 6d., sent securely packed for 48 stamps.—62, Theobald's Road, London, W.C. Hair Machine, for outstanding ears, 10s. 6d.; post, 11s.

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This is a contrivance by which the short cartilage of the nose is pressed into shape by wearing the instrument an hour daily for a short time. Price 10s. 6d., sent free for stamps.—ALEX. ROSS, 62, Theobald's Road, London, opposite Bedford Row. Established 1856. Parcel free from observation.

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INVALUABLE FOR LADIES.

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FACETIE.

"THAT silly old man proposed to me last night. He might have known I would have refused him." "Perhaps he did, dear."

"WHAT is the rest of that quotation, 'Art is long, but—'" "Art is long, but artists are usually short."

GLADYS: "When Jack Higgins kissed me last night I screamed for help." Dolly: "Couldn't you hold him without help?"

OLD FRIEND: "Hello! So you are in trade, now, eh? Why did you retire from literature?" De Writer: "Got hungry."

REVEREND GOODMAN (sympathetically): "Ah, Mr. Heavyloss, we don't know a blessing our wives are, until they are laid silent in the tomb." Heavyloss: "Yes, silence is a great blessing."

WAITER (who has spilled the contents of a water-bottle over a guest): "Shall I get you a napkin?" Guest: "I think you had better get me a mackintosh."

ATTRACTIVE Young Lady: "I should like 'The Wide, Wide World.'" Chivalrous Book-seller: "Were it mine, miss, I would willingly give it to you."

"ARE you taking much interest in the Spanish-Cuban War?" inquired the European statesman. "I should say I am!" replied the capitalist—compound interest!"

FUDDY: "He said he was delighted to see you; and what did you say?" Duddy: "I said the delight was mutual." Fuddy: "Well, that was a very neat way of calling him a liar."

"Yes," remarked young Borem, "it is undoubtedly true that every dog has his day." "Perhaps so," replied Miss Outing, glancing at the clock, and suppressing a yawn; "but he doesn't sit up all night waiting for it."

OLD GENTLEMAN (dictating indignant letter): "Sir,—My typewriter, being a lady, cannot take down what I think of you. I, being a gentleman, cannot think it; but you, being neither, can easily guess my thoughts."

"Do you find, Mrs. Bridey, that the old saying is true that what is enough for one will do for two?" "In some respects, yes," said the charming little lady. "In the matter of chairs, chiefly."

"MR. SHOWMAN," said an inquiring individual at the menagerie, "can the leopard change his spots?" "Yes, sir," replied the individual who stirs up the wild beasts; "when he is tired of one spot, he goes to another."

"WHEN I was in the country last summer," remarked Hunker, "I discovered that a cow is always milked on one side." "And I know which side that is," replied Higgins, who was never in the country in his life. "Which?" "The outside."

MULLIGAN: "It's gettin' so it's a hard matter for a mon to live in France." O'Rourke: "Phy so!" Mulligan: "Why, the birth rate over there is lower than the death rate, so a mon livin' in that brutal country stands a bigger chance of dyin' than he does of bein' born."

MRS. TELFAIR: "Cook, how do you make mock turtle soup?" Cook: "Oh, just like any one else does." Mrs. Telfair (persistently): "Give me your recipe." Cook (hesitatingly): "Well, I just make a foiné, good soup, and then I gets the little mock-turtles and I throws 'em in."

MAGISTRATE: "You are charged with beating a horse. What have you to say for yourself?" Prisoner (sobbing): "Why, yer worship, I've just lost me wife, yer worship." Magistrate: "Now, ten shillings or seven days, prisoner." Prisoner: "Thank yes; sor, Oi think O'll take the tin shillings."

JUNIOR PARTNER: "Well, I think"—puff—"I'll go out in the trade and see if I can get a few orders"—puff, puff. SENIOR PARTNER: "That's right. Don't fail to take along some of those cigars you smoke and offer them to people." JUNIOR PARTNER: "What for?" SENIOR PARTNER: "So the buyers will die before they have time to cancel the orders."

PAT MURPHY," said the magistrate, "the constable says you've been fighting. Now, what have you to say for yourself?" "Plase, yerroner, Oi had a clane white shurt on, an' Oi was so moighty proud av ut that Oi got up a bit of a row wid a man so's Oi could take off me coat and show ut."

THE caller handed the editor a bundle of manuscript. "For your humorous column," he said. "My wife makes fun of my attempts at wit, but I think you will find this about as good as the stuff you usually print." The editor took the manuscript and looked over it. "Humph!" he ejaculated. "Your wife makes fun of your efforts, does she?" "Y—yes, sir, as a general thing." "She hasn't seen this lot, has she?" "No, sir." The editor handed back the manuscript. "Please ask her to 'make fun' of this. Then you may bring it back again. Good-day."

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SOCIETY.

THE Grand Duke and Grand Duchess of Hesse will come to London early in June, on a visit to the Duke and Duchess of Coburg at Clarence House.

PRINCE CHARLES will be in England for some time during the summer, as his Mediterranean cruise with his uncle, Prince Waldemar, has been postponed until October.

THE Princess of Wales will probably pay a visit to the Duke and Duchess of Cumberland about the middle of August, before going to Denmark for the autumn.

It is rumoured that next year the Duke and Duchess of York will go for a round of Colonial visits in the new royal yacht, and that their cruise will extend round the world.

PRINCE CHRISTIAN OF DENMARK and his bride are to reside at the Château of Sorgenfri, which the King has made over to his grandson. Their Royal Highnesses are expected there about the middle of this month. The château has been redecorated and refurnished for them, and its surroundings are beautiful.

THE Queen's birthday is to be celebrated in London on Saturday, the 21st, as it was found impossible to observe it on the proper day (Tuesday, the 24th). All the Ministers and the great officers of the Household will give full-dress dinners, and the Prince of Wales and the Ambassadors and Ministers Plenipotentiary are to dine with Lord Salisbury, the Duke of Connaught and the Duke of Cambridge with Lord Lansdowne, and the Duke of York with Mr. Goschen. It is probable that in consequence of Lady Salisbury's ill-health, the usual Ministerial party on the Queen's birthday will be given this year by the Duchess of Devonshire.

ON August 31st the youthful and charming Queen of Holland will attain her eighteenth birthday, and a week after her Majesty will proceed in state to Amsterdam, for the purpose of officially assuming the reins of government. For three days after the city will be *en fête*, almost every hour of the Queen's stay being occupied by state functions, attendance at public rejoicings, and probably a royal progress through the streets on the evening of the grand illuminations. Queen Wilhelmina will afterwards make her state entry in the Hague, and for three or four days after there will be the same constant succession of state receptions, balls, and concerts, and much more besides. Her Majesty is then expected to pay short visits to the principal towns of the country, probably making the Hague her headquarters, and to terminate the display by opening the States-General there on the 20th of the month. In addition to the foregoing, all high functionaries and members of the States-General will take the oath of allegiance, and the representatives of foreign Powers present their new credentials to the young monarch at the Hague.

THE betrothal of Queen Wilhelmina of the Netherlands to her cousin, Prince Bernhard Heinrich of Saxe-Weimar, is *un fait accompli*, and the engagement is to be announced on the day of her Majesty's coronation, the 8th of September. The late Grand Duchess of Saxe-Weimar, who was a sister of King William III. of Holland, was always anxious to bring about the betrothal of the Queen to her grandson, and the Dutch nation is anxious for this marriage, as Prince Bernhard is the next heir to the Dutch Throne, his elder brother not being able to succeed, as he is naturally the heir to the Grand Duchy of Saxe-Weimar. Prince Bernhard is very rich, as he inherited an enormous fortune from his grandmother. He is still very young, having been born on the 15th of April, 1878. He is studying at the Jena University, and is reported to be a charming young prince of excellent character.

STATISTICS.

COTTON of twelve different colours grows in Peru.

THE public buildings of England are valued at £240,000,000.

THE canals of the United States are 4,468 miles in length.

THERE are 1,775 patents of mechanical motors known.

THE average life of women who work for a living is 36 years.

THE year 47 B.C. was the longest year on record. By order of Julius Caesar, it contained 445 days. The additional days were put in to make the seasons conform as nearly as possible with the solar year.

GEMS.

PRaises are valuable only when they come from lips that have the courage to condemn.

IDLE men are more burdened with their time than the most busy are with their business.

Kindness is the sun of life, the charm to captivate, and the sword with which to conquer.

WHEN we are alone we have our thoughts to watch, in the family our tempers, and in society our tongues.

MORAL energy grows with the obstacles against which it is measured; and the putting forth of moral energy as the purpose of our lives is the highest exemplification of humanity. When we put forth the highest moral energy, then we touch the stars of life.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

POTATO TURNOVERS.—Pare some rather large, sound potatoes, wash them carefully, then cut holes almost through them. With an apple corer remove the round pieces and fill in the holes with sausage meat. Close up the holes with pieces of potato and put the potatoes in a pan in the oven to bake. This makes a most delicious breakfast dish.

HOT CHINESE SANDWICH.—This is an excellent adjunct to High Tea. Slice the bread very thin and cut it round with a large biscuit cutter. Put a thick layer of grated cheese between the two forms, sprinkle with salt and a dash of cayenne pepper, and press the round pieces of bread well together. Fry them to a delicious brown on each side, in equal parts of hot lard and butter, and serve very hot.

CHOCOLATE CANNELONS.—Mix two ounces of grated chocolate with four ounces of finely sifted sugar and a dessertspoonful of flour, add the beaten white of an egg to make a paste, roll out pieces about the size of a walnut very thinly, place them on a buttered tin and bake in a moderately hot oven ten or fifteen minutes. While they are still warm, turn them over a ruler to shape them, and put aside on a sieve to dry.

RAISIN BREAD.—Stone enough raisins to make a coffee cup heaping full, when chopped fine; add one-fourth of a pound of almonds, shelled and blanched; chop or shred them fine—they are much better shredded—grate one-quarter of a pound of chocolate with one teaspoonful of cloves, one teaspoonful of baking powder, and four table-spoonfuls of milk. Mix in flour until just stiff enough to spread into cakes the size of the top of a coffee cup, and about one-eighth of an inch in thickness. Be sure the cakes are well baked. When done, invert the pan upon a thick cloth, and with a sharp knife cut the cakes in strips two inches wide. Pack them away in a dry place. They will keep for weeks.

MISCELLANEOUS.

THE most remarkable echo in the world is that which comes from the north side of a church in Shipley. It distinctly repeats any sentence not exceeding 21 syllables.

THE tramcars in Swedish cities rarely stop for passengers. Men and women there are quite agile and expert in jumping on and off while the cars are in motion.

In some parts of China the punishment for murder is sleeplessness. The culprit is kept awake until he dies. Under this treatment a person lives nine or ten days.

TURKEY and GREECE are the only European countries into which the telephone has not yet been introduced. Sweden has the largest number of telephones per capita of all countries in the world, having one to every one hundred and fifteen persons, and Switzerland comes next, with one to every one hundred and twenty-nine.

THE Canary Club of Vienna have opened a canary exhibition in that city. The club is trying to foster canary raising among working people as an easy method of increasing the income of the poor. The exhibition numbers about 1,500 native canaries, and more than 500 of the Dutch variety, together with a large number of other foreign and domestic song birds.

OF all primitive methods of telling the time, the most ancient existed in China, and is still in use there in some remote quarters. Time was guessed by recourse to the hairless, necessary oak. The Chinaman could and can guess fairly the hour by inspection of the creature's pupil. At noon it is said completely to contract, so that a thin, hair-like, perpendicular line only denotes the pupil, which again after noon begins to dilate. There was, after the downfall of the Roman Empire, one rude method of computing time among the hordes of barbarians who overran Italy. Something like a division of time was obtained by setting a follower of the chief to empty a helmet full of small pebbles one by one into an empty one of similar size.

GREAT as are the possibilities of electricity, their full scope is probably only feebly comprehended. One of the latest devices is a water forge. The details are as yet the secret of the inventor, but in effect the method is as follows: A tank shaped somewhat like an iron-sink is filled with water, which is highly charged with electricity. The piece of iron to be manipulated is held by a pair of pinchers which are attached to an electric wire. When all is ready the iron is dipped into the water, of course causing the positive and negative poles to come in contact. It takes from ten to sixty seconds for the iron to become hot enough to be bent or worked as required. An interesting and important fact is that the heat manifests itself only upon that portion of the iron that is covered by the water, thus rendering it much more controllable than forges of the ordinary pattern. If one inch is under water, only one inch will be red, and so on with any submerged length.

As far as physical conditions were concerned, the inmates of the harems of Agra, once the most splendid of all the Indian cities, were fortunate women. They lived in palaces which were designed by architects and adorned by artists who have never been excelled, and which are still the admiration and the wonder of the world. If the ladies wished to purchase jewels there was a bazaar within the precincts where the diamonds of Golconda and the precious stones of Ceylon might be seen sparkling in the sun. A pond in the Mughal-Bahwan Court was teeming with fish, which a favourite might catch from a marble balcony overhanging the water. The chief Sultana had a boudoir in the Saman Barj, or Jasmine Tower, wherein, adorned with most delicate tracery, was a deep portico, inlaid with rarest art, and a vaulted chamber and a pavilion looking out toward the river. The walls of the Palace of Stars, which contained the ladies' bath, were inlaid with a thousand mirrors, set in marble frames apparently covered with the finest lace work. Baths of inlaid marble were sunk in the floor.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

NOVICE.—The best man.
H. M.—Pronounced "Mar-tins."
NERO.—Better employ a solicitor.
R. E.—Marriage would not be legal.
NINA.—About three and a half months.
YOUNG AND IGNORANT.—You are not too old.
TROUBLESOME READER.—We are unable to say.
DOUBTFUL.—The property will go to the sisters.
X. Y. Z.—A lawyer's signature is not necessary.
CELESTINE.—You cannot insist upon living there.
INQUIRE.—The red hood denotes a doctor of divinity.
ROBBER.—We are at a loss to understand the meaning of your letter.
W. G.—You are entitled to compensation from the railway company.
JANE B.—You can marry again after the decree has been made absolute.
IGNORAMUS.—Residue is just any balance of estate not divided by a will.
INBURNATION.—Bring the matter before the sanitary officer of your district.
IN WANT OF ADVICE.—The result of a prosecution would be very doubtful.
W. E.—The husband is not liable for debts contracted by his wife before his marriage.
AM I RIGHT?—It would be quite justifiable in you, and we think decidedly the best way.
HOWA.—We regret that we can give you no information about the subject of which you write.
X. X.—If your name appears on the jury list prepared by the overseers you are liable to serve.
FLOWER LOVER.—Woodruff is a British plant, and is grown a great deal in old-fashioned gardens.
YUM-YUM.—Paper-hangings for use on walls were introduced into Europe from the East in 1673.
WORRIED FATHER.—A father is not bound to maintain a son after he is able to work for his own living.
WE TWO.—If they reside in different parishes, the banns must be published in each parish church.
HENRIETTA.—Take a leaf of common garden sage, and well rub on the teeth. It has a wonderful effect.
JACK SHREPPARD.—A man cannot be tried again for the same offence if he has been acquitted by a jury.
MISERABLE WOMAN.—He was not free to marry anyone, therefore the ceremony was a meaningless farce.
CHEERO.—Those who have the arranging of the funeral can settle the order of precedence as they like.
INTENDING BROTHER.—If the banns are duly published and certificates produced the marriage can be in any church.
WILTED.—You can take proceedings for breach of promise, but if the man has no means you will get no damages.
CYOTLET.—To remove mud stains from black cloth, well brush the cloth first, then rub the stains with a raw potato cut in half.
AN OLD HAG.—No, we have never heard of hot water causing wrinkles. Of course you should never use very hot water, but only just warm.
K. R.—A judicial separation does not authorize either of the parties to marry again. Both of them might in such a case be prosecuted for bigamy.
HOUSEKEEPER.—Medicine stains may be removed from silver spoons by rubbing with a rag dipped in sulphuric acid, and washing it off with soap-suds.
A DISPUTED POINT.—The Victoria Cross is bestowed for valour in face of the enemy; the Albert Medal is a decoration for saving life or limb or sea.
AMUSE L.—We cannot advise you to adopt the stage as a profession. Your education is evidently defective, and we do not think you would succeed.
LOVING.—A cable's length is one-tenth of a nautical mile (6,080 feet). The longest cable is the Norwegian, which is within a fraction of seven times over.
AMUSEY.—Rest is out of the question in a case like yours; a medical man must see you personally in order to ascertain whether anything will avail.
MIDDY.—The *Cerberus* was launched on September 8th, 1892, and sailed for trial trip on April 22nd, 1893; the *Lucania* was launched on February 2nd, 1892.
BLEAR HOUSE.—By sending in 6d. to Messrs. Harrison & Sons, St. Martin's Lane, you can get copy of *Gazette* containing latest official list of estates in Chancery.
ANATHEMA.—We could not undertake to give the name of a book dealing with any branch of law which would be easily understood by one untrained in legal phraseology and forms.
WANTING A WHISKER.—Fry well in the pan the fish has been cooked in a piece of very fat bacon, dry off the grease, dry with a dish-cloth, and then the pan will be perfectly free from all taste or smell.

BELLE.—Eric means brave, rich powerful; Albert signifies nobly bright, illustrious. Your writing might be much better, still it is very legible.

WIDOWED.—The wife is not obliged to pay her late husband's debts unless he leaves his property to her, in which event the debts must be paid if sufficient money has been left to cover them.

RALEPATER.—The office has long since been a sinecure, but is retained to afford Members of Parliament an opportunity, by accepting sines under the Crown, of vacating their seats.

HAIRLESS BETTY.—It depends upon what the stains are and what the fabric is; greasy stains and ink stains, for instance, require different treatment, and you proceed on different lines to clean woollen and cotton fabrics.

JACOB.—There is no "sure and simple way" of making hair grow, or of darkening the complexion, but experience has proved that systematic use of the razor will do more to promote the growth of a moustache than any other arrangement.

J. B.—Men who married their wives after 1st January, 1875, and got no fortune with them, are not liable in aliment to their parents-in-law; married previous to that date they are liable as if they were sons.

FLICK.—Strew powdered borax liberally in their haunts; continue this for some time, and by degrees they will disappear. It does not seem to kill at once, but renders the place obnoxious to them, and they leave it eventually.

BRINDLE.—You had better go to a respectable seller of painter's materials; tell him what you want and have the various paints made up for you. They may cost something more than you would pay at the small general, but they will give you value.

MOTHERHOOD.

I wonder so that mothers ever fret

At little children clinging at their gown;

Or that the footstep, when the days are wet,

Are ever black enough to make them frown.

If I could find a little mummy boot,

A cap or jacket on my chamber floor,

If I could kiss a rosy, restless foot,

And hear it patter in my home once more;

If I could mend a broken cart to-day,

To-morrow make a kite to reach the sky,

There is no woman in God's world could say

She was more blissfully content than I.

But ah! the dainty pillow next my own

Is never rumpled by a shining head;

My slumber birdling from its nest has flown!

The little boy I used to love is dead!

But now it seems surpassing strange to me

That while I bore the badge of motherhood

I did not kiss more oft and tenderly

My little child, who brought me only good.

MOLLIE.—Make cold water with soap in it; wash the blinde with that and a chamotte, and then wring out and dry; if you use warm or hot water you spoil the chamotte leather, and turn the dust on the blind into mud; cold water takes it off.

HEAD OF THE FAMILY.—The sons and daughters share equally. The effects should be valued, and either actually divided or sold, and the proceeds divided, or any one of the sons or daughters might, by agreement, keep the goods and pay out the others in cash.

ADMIRING READER.—We do not know where you can obtain these books; but if you will apply to a good newsdealer he will be able to inform you, because it is his business to know all about books, where they can be obtained, prices, &c.

A ROUGH DIAMOND.—Diamonds may be black as well as white, and some are blue, red, brown, yellow, green, pink, and orange; but there is no violet diamond, although, in addition to amethysts, there are sapphires, rubies and garnets of that colour.

SLAVEY.—If a servant leaves before her month is up, she forfeits her wages for the whole month; if she is dismissed without a month's notice, or after a month's notice has been given, but before the time is up, unless for gross misconduct, she can claim a month's wages.

LXX.—The will must be in writing, signed by the testator at the foot or end, or by some other person by his direction, and in his presence—such signature to be made or acknowledged by the testator in the presence of two or more witnesses. Two are sufficient for every kind of property.

DANDY DAN.—Bashfulness is often the result of nervousness; but in many instances it arises from the fact of having mixed but little in company. In the latter case it can be mitigated, if not altogether thrown off, by going as much as possible into society, and endeavouring to take a due part in conversation.

FAL.—Our Government have repeatedly warned emigrants against proceeding from this country to South American republics; neither of those named by you should be selected; labour is largely performed in them by native population at rates which cut out European workmen completely; the climate certainly is fairly good, but the countries are subject to epidemics of fever which are excessively fatal.

A. B.—At death of the man without making a will his wife takes one-third of all he possesses, and the family get the remaining two-thirds equally among them; this includes household goods, money, clothing &c.—everything, in fact, the man possesses.

IN TROUBLE.—Really, we cannot advise you, but must leave you to your own resources. Perhaps if you let the young man see your feelings have changed again towards him, he will return to his old allegiance; but we have our doubts.

WHAT TO DO?—It is not wrong to talk in a friendly way with the young man; neither is it encouraging him. If he respects you less for wishing to be dutiful, he is unworthy of your affection. As to your waiting four or five years and then marrying him, it would seem that this is the only thing to do. After you are twenty-four or twenty-five years old you surely can marry whom you please, and have no anxiety, save the break in your relations with your father's household.

E. G.—The death duties so-called are the various duties paid upon the estate of a deceased person by his heirs and legatees; there is, first of all, an estate duty payable upon the aggregate value; then comes the legacy and succession duties, payable by the heirs and legatees who obtain shares of the goods and money deceased possessed, the sums payable varying with the relationship of the parties to the deceased; succession duty is upon heritable estate or houses and lands.

CHIFF.—Thoroughly wash and drain a pint and a half of rice; put it in a saucepan, with a quart of beef broth, two cups of tomato sauce and a little salt. Mix, boil, cover tightly, and cook for twenty minutes; add six ounces of clarified butter, boiling hot, stir quickly and vigorously with a wooden spoon until thoroughly mixed. Cover the dish tightly, putting a cloth inside of the cover, so as to keep in the steam. It will absorb the butter, and become light and creamy. Turn the rice into a round, deep dish, and send to the table with two quarts of beef broth in a soup tureen and a plate of grated Parmesan cheese.

BETSY.—Two pounds veal, quarter pound bacon, two hard boiled eggs, salt, pepper, and a very little nutmeg; boil the bacon a minute or two, cut the veal in small slices, cut the bacon the same, and slice the eggs; put them in the pie-dish time about and the seasoning, fill up the dish with water or stock from the bones; paste, half pound flour, quarter pound butter, half teaspoonful baking powder, chop up the butter among the flour, make it into a paste with cold water, roll this out in a long, narrow piece and then fold it in three folds, turn round and roll it the other way, fold again and roll again, make it the size needed and cover the pie with it and ornament the top; brush with egg and put in oven about an hour till it is ready.

DISCOURAGED.—True, it is not always an easy matter to get into the right channel and to be permitted to do that for which one has a natural aptitude. But mechanical work falls to your hand with all the ease and ability you possess, and then try in the spare moments to improve yourself so as to be able to fit yourself for something better when the opportunity arrives. Every moment of leisure you have between hours of actual labour and necessary sleep, fill with some useful, profitable employment. Do not try to leap upward, lest you fall and never rise, but creep, creep, step by step, always reserving sufficient to carry you to the next step and enable you to hold your balance while you prepare for the one that is to follow.

CORROD BLIND.—Boil five eggs hard, remove the shells, rub the yolks through a sieve, and chop the whites, not making them too fine. Put in a double boiler over the fire one cup of milk. Rub together one tablespoonful of butter with two of flour, add a beaten egg, and mix a little of the warm milk with this mixture before stirring it into the boiling milk, season with salt and pepper, and stir until it is a thick, smooth mixture. Take from the fire, and when the mixture is almost cool, stir in the prepared yolks and whites, and a very little onion juice if the flavour is liked. When cold enough to handle, mould in the shape of chops, using a tin mould, or they may be formed with the hands. Roll the chops in a beaten egg and then in bread crumbs, and fry them a delicate brown. Stick a sprig of parsley in the small end of the chop, and arrange these in a row down the centre of a platter and turn Bechamel sauce around, but not over them; or French peas may be arranged upon the platter with the chops, and the sauce served with them from a separate dish.

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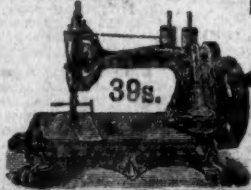
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